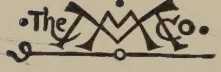
THE ROAD IN TUSCANY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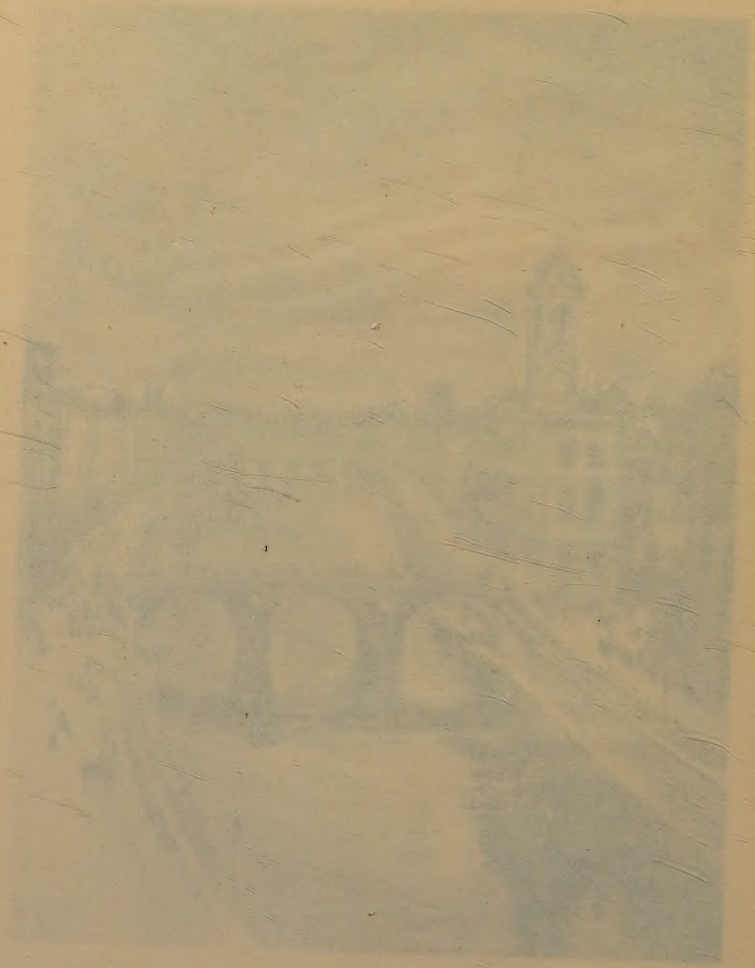

THE ROAD IN TUSCANY

A COMMENTARY

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

I' mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
Che dêtta dentro, vo significando.
24 Purg. 52.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER I

LUCCA TO PISA

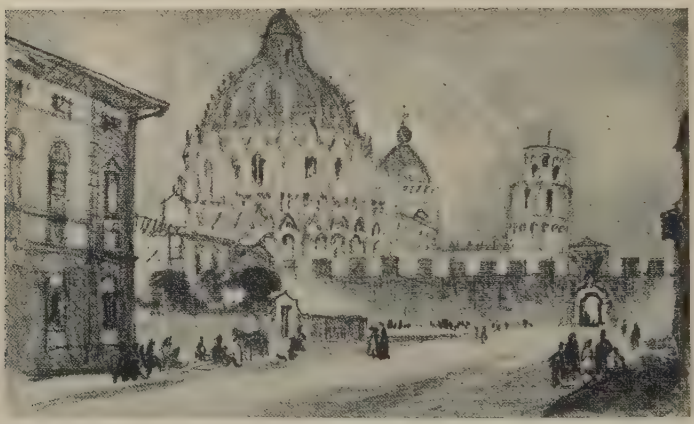
FROM his high grass bastion at Lucca, San Donato pointed me the way across the marsh, his pastoral staff benevolently extended over waving fields of buttercups. There was no wind that morning for the kites of the long-skirted Seminarists; and afar off over the golden meads you could only just see Monte San Giuliano. That mountain which once hid mortal enemies from each other —

Outlook of San Donato: Ripafratta.

Which Lucca hides from Pisan eyes,

was veiled in the midst of great heat. Not until I was nearly below his breast could I see how closely wooded he is, how velvety with fir and ilex — and to get there was a two hours' business; for you have to follow the Serchio's reach towards the sea, and accost the hills first at a narrow throttle, whereof Nozzano is the barbican and Ripafratta holds the keys. If I were minded

once more to discourse of wars, Ripafratta or Nozzano would furnish me a text — Nozzano clumped together on a rock, with church, castle, village, carved, as it seems, out of one piece, blended in one, rearing one ragged head to the weather, but dipped to the midriff in bright



PISA.

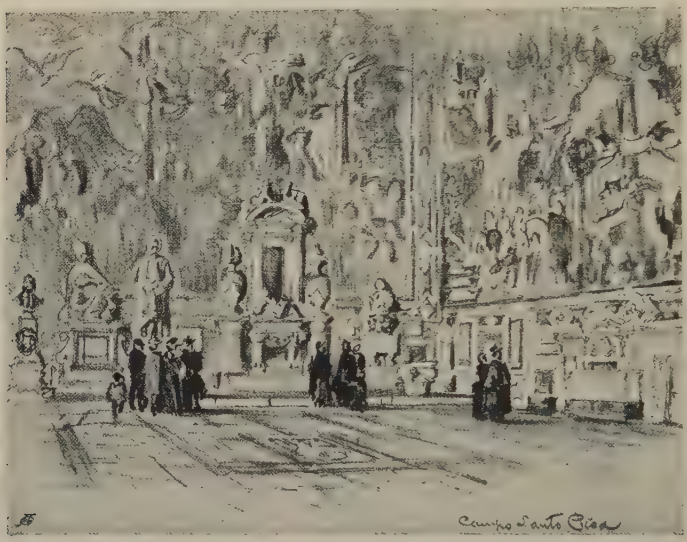
green; Ripafratta, too, hardy little mercenary of war, in red and brown clouts — or, if you like, a camp wench, anybody's price. But I am aweary of Tuscan campaigning, which was like nothing so much as the bickering of street dogs in an Eastern town — a snarling encounter, a sudden rush, uproar, indiscriminate ripping and rolling, and then peace, when the battles are swept into a side-alley or fire another quarter of the city.

What does it matter if Lucca had Ripafratta for a year, and Pisa for two years more, when Florence got all in the end? We drove through the dishevelled place, spying for the first sight of Pisa, and getting it soon. For when you have left the hillsides where are the villas of old Pisan

PISA.

princes — of Spanish dignity and seclusion — and the woods and shady places loved by Lucca, at Rigoli you are in the Pisan Maremma. From the very edge of this treeless flat, over pale earth caked and cracked, scummy ditches and scant grass, you may look to a line where sea and sky are one, and (with Dante's traveller) in that bar of fire and blended mist "hail the tremulous sea-shore." Anon, in that same golden distance, you will see

three solemn bulks, mammoths savouring the solace of the water; one heaped like a mountain of flame-colour, one with a placid back shining wet, one reeling apart; huge creatures at their mysteries, all alike shadowy in heat. You are



CAMPO SANTO, PISA.

now in touch with what makes Pisa famous, and stays the pilgrims all agog for Rome — the trinity of marble, first and last testimony of Pisa in pride. Pisa herself lies long and low to the south — belfries, cupolas, and thrust-up loggias. Very far away, beyond all this temporal power, a cloud-country stands half revealed, the blue folds of the hills which keep Siena inviolate.

True delta country is this, dry, shadowless, full of smart to the eyes; one is but ten miles or so, yet worlds away, from the green bowers of Lucca. Expect no delicate mysteries here, no beauties hidden, no

The miracle.

THE ARSENAL, PISA.

coy, reluctant streets, no arching shade or grassy walks; but be prepared for a miracle. You drive directly to a brick wall, the road turns a sharp angle at the gate, your horses scrape and slide on the flags as you pull up for the *dazio:* in a green field, suddenly, the three giants glare at you, as if you had disturbed their peace, flaunting crimson in your face, white light, angry

purple, lace of stone, streams of orange rust — monstrous, overwhelming, blinding and intolerable. They subdue you by their size, by their breaking of every known, comfortable rule. The Tower of Babel (which dared to bully God) must

LUNGARNO, PISA.

have been like this, and like this thrust aside for its pains; this great domed heap might stifle more than the Christian graces; this shining church could never ape Christian humility. Imagine the sight: a broad green field, and three colossi vaunting their splendours alone in it! It may well be doubted if the travelled

world has a greater sight to show than this stupendous group on the edge of a little dead town. Accident helps design; it had needed the concurrence to be so shocked by Pisa. At Siena you may have a better view of a great church,

DOOR OF CATHEDRAL, PISA.

and a wonderful tiger-moth it looks, swooning there on the rock. But the belfry adds no wonder; the baptistry is out of sight. In colour, at least, the Florentine group is far more lovely — if you could only see it. Arezzo has a noble church — Orvieto, Assisi — one can name two score. But these things! They dazzle, they are alone to dazzle. They brave it like brides,

and each is more insolent than the last. Pick them to pieces if you choose: it is easy; but get your breath first. There is something here which makes judgment drunk. The cupola is more than Byzantine — it is Russian. But the purple bloom

PISA.

of it! But the lacery out of which this strange flower grows! Is the baptistry overweening? Does it make out the gate of the Pisan heaven to be greater than the goal? Is not the belfry an undercut spiral, a core of stone with a gallery twisted about it? Is it lawful to treat stone as if it were pith of rushes? All this may be true, and yet make no matter. See them at dawn

before the shadows fall, see them raying heat and light like suns at noon, see them under the stare of the moon — and cavil no more. You will come to think them essays of the Demiurge, and will as soon dare to approve the everlasting hills.

PISA.

The Pisans, having built for themselves this church, baptistry, and belfry, which were and are still *mirabilia mundi*, and having added to them an acre for their dead, than which you will find no better, contented themselves with so great feats of art, and built no more; but taking to politics and warfare, considering the advantage over Genoa, conversion

Of the Pisans and their fate.

of Saracens, lordship of islands, conquest of Tuscany, and such like, became the shuttlecocks of various tyrants, mortgaged themselves to get out of debt, were then bought by Florence from a Milanese rip, and made slaves for five centuries. The most arrogant nation between Po and Tiber, with the cleanest pretensions to Roman descent — and Etruscan if they had but known it — they paid the dearest for this nobility of theirs, and found the Florentines (like upstarts buying ancestry) as well able to purchase honour as any other market stuff. Here you have the history of Pisa in a nutshell; and her streets and squares and melancholy Spanish air will speak it for you better than I can. Of Pisa in pride those great buildings are all that is left — standing apart from the rest, as well they may.

Pisa in subjection — the Medici imprint, the taint of the Grand Dukes — begins the moment you turn your back on the Leaning Tower. You need go no farther than a bowshot to smell the fard and hair-powder, and see in your mind's eye the sedan chairs go swaying down the bare street, the starched and wigged effigy speechless behind the glass. Gian Gastone, a dribbling old fop, smirks on the Piazza of the Knights — last of the Medici line. Stucco-faced as the place is, trimmed and shuttered as it is, you would never

suppose it to hide up the hulk of that dreadful tower where Ugolino and his four boys gnawed their fingers until —

Più che il dolor potè il digiuno.

"Hunger did that which grief could never."

PIAZZA DEL DUOMO, PISA.

But there it is, for all that, the skeleton of Pisa's whitewashed cupboard, and Gian Gastone thrusts his lip at it. The rest of his race are with him in line upon the palace front, thick-lipped, narrow-browed, fish-eyed, and dull. Before them all Cosimo the First, a bully, but a man, bestrides a trampling horse. Let him be Cæsar with his foot on Pisa's neck. Pisa was his, for he made it.

He founded the Order of the Knights of Saint Stephen, laid out the Piazza to do it honour, built a church for its chapter, and had his statue to front it. For what it is, the stately pretence of a tyrant, you could hardly have

Works of Cosimo Primo.

PISA FROM THE LUCCA ROAD.

a finer piazza — spacious and dignified, set about with tall buildings; chivalric, too, as the times understood chivalry. The rest of the town agrees with it so well, one supposes it is owing to the same powerful hand. The main streets are broad, and squalor decently veiled. The Lungarno is superb; no rags and tatters dipping into the stream as those of the Borgo at Florence, nothing

to obtrude upon the march of the river; and a nobly curving river it is, full and broad, held in

CAMPO SANTO, PISA.

by a fine wall and wide carriage-way, and on either side a row of palaces which, if not splendid

(as in truth they are not), have a substantial air, and announce their fitness to hold gentlemen. Two such, of English blood, two of them did contain, as the polite will remember. Byron's, facing south, is a square brown building dressed with white stone, broad-eaved and shuttered as it should be, the picture of solid comfort. That is a grace which the noble owner for the time being had neither desired nor deserved.[1] Shelley's house, near the Bridge of the Fortress, close to the bend of the river, is larger, and is very white; that, also, perfectly the "family mansion" of the auctioneer. If he had the whole of it, which I can hardly suppose, he had "ample verge and room enough" to escape from Leigh Hunt, and a garret in which to lock up Godwin. I don't know where Byron kept his pea-fowl. They lived somewhere in the environs, *en pension*.

Reflections upon fishermen.

The Arno here at Pisa has a turbid wave and banks of clay, yet nourishes certain large fish, of which I have eaten, and (to judge by symptoms of the tide-way), certain small, never seen by me in net or

[1] It was the Lanfranchi palace, and had need to be large. Medwin says that Byron came to Pisa with "seven servants, five carriages, nine horses, a monkey, a bull-dog and a mastiff, two cats, three pea-fowl, and some hens." The proprietor of all this gear occupied the first floor, guarded by the bull-dog — which knew Shelley, but refused to be comforted by Medwin.

dish. But up river and down, on either bank, do squat Pisans, working seines or rods, to

THE BORGO, PISA.

every man his umbrella as a screen from sun or rain. I suppose they were at it while Ugolino was agonising in the Tower; and that when

Neri Capponi was battering the walls with his mangonels, there were peaceful Pisans aligned below the Fortezza watching a bunch of worms on a string. Tuscany is full of such contrasting thoughts, for the sights that provoked them are still here. Below this bridge, over the square houses and the river wall, there looms to this day the bulk of a great fortress and a tower beside it which looks like a blind giant. Shelley believed it to be the Tower of Famine, but he was wrong. There is another above bridge, hidden deep in trees. Those two old warriors have seen some wickedness in their days and have helped to do it. The Pisans crouch underneath them now at their peaceful, fruitless task, and their daughters or sweethearts come and minister to their needs out of handkerchiefs and case-bottles. So, in many an old fresco, while the Saviour of the world is hanging on His cross, and His friends pity or gaze up in ecstasy from the foot of it, there will be a pink town on a hill in the distance, towered and walled, and belted with a silver river. Mules will lead flour-sacks through the gate, there will be a boat in mid-stream, a man fishing from the bank. On a terrace over the battlements will sit a lady bleaching her hair — a lover and a poet will be near her, one expressing (from a scroll) the sentiments of the other. Someone will say,

Duomo Pisa. N. Transept.

an instance, here, of the ideality of Italian art! But not a bit of it. The man has given you what he saw every day. His city was at war,

VIA S. MARIA, PISA.

the enemy at the gate. There would be burnings, pillagings, ravishings, and such like; somebody would be getting hanged on a gibbet. All day the bells would be swinging, all night the beacons would flare. God would go to His grave

in order that men might one day stir out of theirs. But still the mules would creep up the hill, women hear tales of love, and men go a-fishing.

PISA.

A good inn.

Nor would you ever guess, to see the Pisans go about their business, that they are the descendants of a race enslaved, though Shelley guessed it, or thought he did,

> Amid the desolation of a city
> Which was the cradle and is now the grave
> Of an extinguished people. . . .

There is no desolation nowadays: the place has a very Spanish air to me with its tall, inscrutable

PISA.

houses and empty streets. There is a good inn up a dark lane — La Cervia its name — kept by a

stately widow, and kept in good order. To hear her rate the maids, to see the waiters fly, is to be assisting at a comedy of Goldoni's. "Padrona, si," "Padrona, no," is all they dare say to her. I came upon her one morning cheapening a fish. It was a vast fish, and a good (as I can testify, who ate of it afterwards); the proud taker of it knew its merits and was voluble upon them. The Padrona listened without changing a muscle; she heard every word, but never moved a hair. At the end, still looking at the fish, she asked, "Quanto domandi?" The man smiled wistfully, shrugged, and murmured some supposed price. She heard him, though I did not; her bosom laboured with a tumult and was delivered of a sigh. She lifted the gill of the fish with a contemptuous finger, and — "Pah!" says she, and lets it down again with a splash. After that she condescended to name her own price, which was immediately accepted. She asked me at dinner, did I not think it an admirable fish? And as fresh as fresh!

A noble game.

Muddy or not, and fishy as it is fished, the Arno here is a noble stream, running full-flooded to the sea. The Pisans made more of it than the Florentines ever could; for not only did they trade upon it, sending out their argosies east and west, but they took their

pleasure there, nobly as befits. Noble is the word for the river, and it should be recorded for the field of a very noble game played yearly upon it to within time of living memory. They called it the *Giuoco del Ponte*, the Bridge Game. I found a room in the museum devoted to its relics — flags, targes, suits of padded leather, challenges on satin, acceptances full of flourish, sonnets of victory, sonnets of defiance, hortatory sonnets,

> Chi l' antiche pompe, e'l fiero Giuoco
> Or mi rammenta. . . .

elegies, old prints dedicated to the patron of the year, with that patron's boat in the foreground and himself in tie-wig, his *chapeau de bras* extended in the air, standing to cheer the combatants. Once it was "I nobilissimi Signori, Maria Contessa di Lanesborough e Giacomo King": the English of the eighteenth century were fond of Pisa. Lastly, there is a model of the Ponte di Mezzo, with the parties of either side striving in what used to be called (and was) "mimic warfare" — the phrase seems part of the game. This is how it was played. Mezzogiorno (that is, Pisa south of the Arno) challenged Tramontana, Pisa over the water; or it might be the other way round, according to previous victory. The day and hour appointed, the

battles assembled, each on his own side of the river. Amidbridge were two marshals of the fight with the banners of Pisa. Each *contrada* sent a dozen men, and there were six *contrade* on either side; twelve dozen men, as I make it, were to contend for the bridge, armed in helmet and breastplate, and a targe — that is, a narrow, pointed shield of wood, fixed on the fore-arm, the sharp end at the elbow, and projecting. It may be conceived from this much that the game was simple: it was as simple as a battle. At gun-fire the opposing sides rushed on to the bridge where the marshals stood. They tried, not to push each other back, but to cross; after an hour the gun sounded again, and every man stood where he was. One of the marshals threw a cord to the other, who drew it taut. That side won which had the more men in the enemy's half bridge. This was the game at its simplest; no doubt it was complicated by local hatreds, by hot blood, vainglory, and the presence of sweethearts upon the housetops. If the *contrada* feeling was anything approaching that of Siena — and there is no reason to suppose the Pisans less Tuscan than most — the havoc must have been tremendous, and many a man mortally hurt by a thrust of the *targa*. In the old prints they show you boats herded under the bridge to save the

The Candelabra, Pisa.

giuocatori, who are tumbling into the river like frogs from a rushy bank. It seems that if the enemy saved you from the water you were a prisoner; for at either bridge end there are pounds, ticketted *Prigionieri*. The tall houses on each side of Arno are filled with spectators;

PISA.

ladies and their cavaliers are at the windows, chambermaids and theirs on the roof, footboys cling to the chimney-pots. The nobility are in barges on the flood, with their banners trailing behind, dipt in the water. I observed my Lady Lanesborough's lozenge thus employed: her ladyship and the Honourable Mr. King in the stern

of the vessel were applauding. Mr. King waved his hat with the air of the Marquis of Granby at Minden. There is not the least suggestion of the proud, passionate old Pisa of great days. The wigs and plaster of the eighteenth century are everywhere; the Lorrainers have accomplished what the Medici began; Pisa is transmogrified.

CASTELLO VINCIGLIATA.

CHAPTER II

INTO THE SOUTHERN HILLS: PISA TO CERTALDO

ERA, Elsa, Ema, Evola, and Pesa are the five sister rivers which flow from the mountains of Volterra into Arno, between Prato-magno and the sea. Their names are symphonies, and so are they: green water, grey banks, and yellow sands form the whole chord of the upland colour. Any one of their valleys will afford you harmonious escape from a plain whose opulence is cloying. You do not come to Tuscany to soak in sap-green. Choose, then, which valley to ascend: from Pontedera you may follow the Era through bald downs to Volterra, or by Evola take a rougher road by Montopoli to the great shoulder of Monte Maggio, which hides San Gimignano from her windy neighbour. My own choice was for neither of these — though by either I should have escaped the sooner — but for Elsa. I would endure the high road even unto Empoli, see the Arno's long

The choice of roads.

reach there; then, having climbed the height of San Miniato, whose tall tower can be observed twenty miles away, follow that gentlest sister of the five — slow-winding Elsa — to Boccaccio's town on the hill; thence by long circuits I should win San Gimignano. So I kept the hither side of Chianti, and missed San Casciano in the Val

TORRE DELLA FAME, PISA.

di Pesa, and Lorenzo's mountain torrent, the Ombrone, which (after his manner) he turned into a nymph, and doted on — in *ottava rima*, perfectly melodious and as empty as a bladder. One must miss something in a country where every turn of the road brings you to a jut of rock, and every rock has bred a nation.

Let me count the gains rather than the losses

of that fine spring morning. After the drab outskirts of Pisa, the Maremma and the dyked road, I gained Cascina, a walled arcaded town at the limit of the Vico Pisano, grey within a red husk of walls, inexhaustibly picturesque; then came Pontedera, walled again — and with each a thrill. That is a thing you may count upon — that flutter of expectancy and its full reward — whenever you approach a walled town by road. By road, observe, but not otherwise. Seen thus, the wall must be negotiated; you must pass through the gates with other wayfarers. A walled city is like a veiled bride. What is one about to embrace? There are no gradations, no straggling line of suburbs to water down the type before you reach the heart. The truth is flashed upon you plump and plain. You leave the fields, you clear the gates — here is Cascina, here Pontedera for good or ill. To them, through them and beyond, an inexorable white road runs as straight as a ruled line towards Florence, and (sure sign of Florentine dominion) the cypresses begin to lift their heads, in groves by the wayside, sable as night, or sparsely in the fields, one sooty flame striking up in a hedgerow: —

Cascina, Pontedera, walled towns.

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi —

the Mantuan's image for a very Mantuan land-

scape. It was a Sunday in late April when I saw all these lazy riches; the sun and the larks in the sky seemed the only active things. The men were in the wineshops and the women in church — or most of them. But some frowsy, dark-browed girls craned from upper windows in Pontedera to see us clatter through; some heavy young men were asleep on benches by the tavern door; some dogs were catching at flies as they drowsed. All's one to Pontedera whether Pisa or Florence be lord! Yet this is a road of memories; armies have trampled it. There's not a crumbling wall between the two cities that has not been wetted with blood.

Immediately after Pontedera a low spur of hill starts up from the level, runs the north parallel of your road for a league or so, and bears a crown. You cannot fail to notice Santa Maria-in-Monte, pink and white upon a boss of sage-green, with her white belfry gleaming in the sun. It lies across the water; just before you, east by south, you have Rotta-upon-Arno, a ruddy-brown village with a square tower, where they make bricks out of Arno mud. The river makes a deep bend to kiss Rotta's dusky cheek; and a pretty country thing she is, though she looks across the flood to a prettier, her pale sister on a

Rotta, Santa Maria-in-Monte; a pious observance.

green throne — which we should call Saint Mary-at-Hill. How many towns go partners in the mercies of Arno! Lastra and Signa, Montelupo and Capraja — and now these two. And so it is that the fairer is ever the more remote. Here Rotta plays the saucy romp of the highway, the fancy of any *fattore* in a two-wheeled cart. Modesty abides, I gather, behind the green lattices of St. Mary's. Yet admire at Rotta the lonely stretches of the river above it and below; placid breadths of water scarcely streaked by a dabchick — a triangle sail, maybe, beating up — rows of service poplars, silver grey — golden water meadows behind them — a peaceful, smiling, Sunday country. By a bridge over the Ciecina brook you will see Montopoli above the valley of Evola, a long hill town very boldly fired by the sun, with a red tower predominant — tattered ensign of her ancient state. There is a more comfortable sight near at hand — a trick they have, when pence fail, of making bowers for the Madonna of clipped yews. The hedgerows here are of yew more often than not. Within any length of it you may see her darkling, like a bird on a nest of eggs, and always a bunch of wild flowers before her, fresh from the wayside. Once, indeed, and just hereabouts, I found her caged in an old egg-box, and that perched in the

hedge. An egg-box, I do assure you, with a wreath of buttercups and daisies all about it. I don't mind confessing that I was moved — as who would not be? How our country prospers, nourishes the virtues, tells the truth, spends its happy ease, without the Madonna to smile approval, to admonish or to counsel, I do not in

THE ARNO AT PISA.

the least understand. Still less how, having once had her for its friend, it could ever have decided to do without her. It is not a racial matter; she is by no means a Latin goddess; you will see her in Germany, Belgium, Russia, Ireland, Greece. The people of all these countries adore her openly, but we are too shamefaced, it seems. A tale of love will always send some tongue into

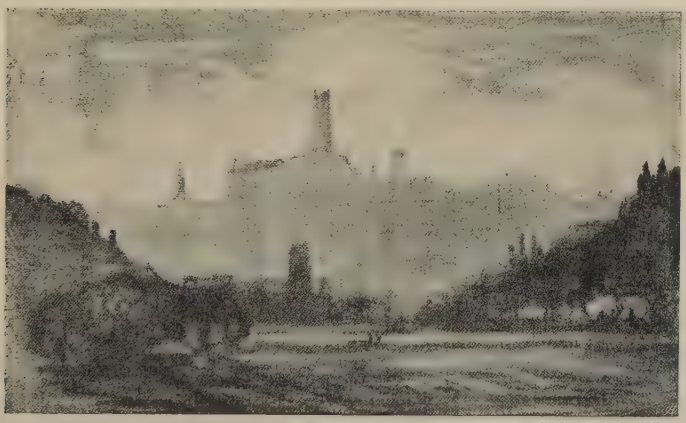
some cheek. We do not choose to own that we love our mothers; and if one of us love God he had better not say so. Therefore we deny ourselves this pretty bosom-friendship, choke up this ever-running fount of emotion, and ask our boys and girls to love Virtue. Lord help us! It is very well to extenuate an egg-box shrine, and to exhibit it as the sorry remnant of that burning faith which built Florence a dawn-coloured church, and made Lucca della Robbia's descendants marquesses. The only answer is, that, to be sure, it is no greater thing than the two mites in the treasury, but yet one may be as glad of one as of the other. For one person who can serve God in spirit and in truth there should be a thousand who can do it only in egg-boxes and buttercups. And so sure as a woman sets a pious picture in an egg-box and puts a nose-gay in front of it, she is a lover, I'll trouble you, and therefore she is blessed.

San Miniato de' Tedeschi.

As the land closes in upon the river the country grows fantastically fair. An amphitheatre of abrupt monticules reveals itself, on each a towered town, a castle, a heap of monastery building, or a gleaming white villa, cypress-haunted; but the highest is always that which carries San Miniato-of-the-Germans, a city impossible to be hid. I

Baptistry Lucca.

turned aside from the Empoli road to see it for the sake of Pier delle Vigne, a pleasant poet and much-injured statesman. Nor did I repent, though I suppose my horses did, for it stands upon a rock, the highest of a series of three, round each of which we had to creep afoot. Cypresses led us the way, and heavy-booted peasants, trudg-



SAN MINIATO.

ing home from the fields in companies, the women singing like wood-birds at dusk, the men apart. The town has a castellated keep and gatehouse, a little octagonal church, a little round church, an ugly collegiate church, and on the summit of its final rock, higher than the highest belfry, the great shaft, cleft in the midst, which is the terrific menace of all the valleys about. That was where

the Suabian Emperors had their high seat and bed of justice. There judged, there sonnetteered, and there pined Pier delle Vigne, from whom Dante, brushing by him in the hell-wood of suicides, tore a gnarly limb. According to his own account, he was a faithful servant of Cæsar's, but he used a privilege for which a man must pay dear:

> I am that one who held both keys
> Of Frederick's heart, which I dispensed,
> Opening and shutting with such ease,
> There was no man but found it fenced.

Envy, he says:

> Envy the whore, who from the gates
> Of Cæsar never takes her eyes —

envy, the disease in the bones of princes, undid him. The story says that in this tower they blinded him by means of the red-hot basin,[1] and that from this very rock, as he was being led to his death at Pisa, he dashed himself headlong:

> My spirit, driven by scornful gust
> To ease in death the sting of scorn,
> To my just self made me unjust.

Milton never wrung stronger juices from common words. But if we fail to understand why Cato was to be at large in Purgatory while Pier grew writhen in Hell — seeing each had preferred death

[1] This torment has a verb of its own: *bacinare*, to wit. The atrocity must have been as common as boycotting.

to his dishonour — it may be because great Rome seems to us greater without such accommodations. Let Cato stand with his own, say we. But Dante thought not.

Pier is a ghost for whom the great tower stands spokesman; other there were who now have no witness in this little old town. Whitewash covers all the blood-stains made by Mangiadori rending Malpigli, or Malpigli stabbing Mangiadori in the dark. They have put up a monument to Garibaldi where you would have looked to see one to the *Stupor Mundi*. The church, which must have heard those rascals sing *O Salutaris Hostia*, is bare of any sign that so it did. It stands in a little empty piazza, which it graces with a tondo of the Della Robbia, no more out of place and no less fragrant than a flower in a wall — being, indeed, the same sort of artless accident of the sun's to all appearance, and as different from its brethren as one flower differs from another. A stooping Madonna, deeply curtseying with crossed arms, an angel frizzed like a *signorino*, God the Father with His meinie of cherubim approving from the sky. Good title deeds for a *marchese* the like of these! Beyond that, the church reveals frescoes and mild Tuscan altar-pieces — thin, happy things — and a wise old priest teaching the Catechism to

Pleasant things in San Miniato.

a score of children, doing the best he could for the reputation of San Giuseppe. There is a scouring drive to be done — circle after circle of road at an angle of forty-five — before you recover the plain of Empoli. A fat Samminiatese passed me on this declivity, swaying in his tax-cart as his horse galloped down with a loose rein. Good, easy man, he had his spectacles on his nose and read the *Corriere della Sera*. Neither the terrors of the steep nor the purple and grey stretches of the great valley, half revealed in the gathering dusk, had any interest for him.

Empoli in the plain.

Empoli seemed a hiving, unaired place after that empty mountain town. Its one long street was thronged with Sunday passengers, and every window had its elbow-cushion, and pair, or two pair, of shoulders thrust out. There you have a pastime of which the Tuscan woman never tires. When she has passed the age of being looked at, she will look — from a window. Men go to the café: the woman's café is the street, and the window-sill her little table. As for the promenade, it is a solemn ritual in which the following points are observed. The girls walk together in mid street, the young men on either side of them. The girls go one way, the young men meet them going the other; meet and pass; but there are no recognitions,

greetings, salutations, sidelong looks. Conversation is in undertones, no one laughs, and no one stops walking. You never saw such a mummery, so devoutly done. A few steps aside there is a piazza set with trees, a public garden well kept —

EMPOLI.

and empty. Beyond that, again, you find a bridge over a long reach of river, an embanked way, a parapet upon which not to sit is an absurdity. No one sits there. Yet there are fishermen to be seen setting their lines aslant the flood, singing plaintive songs as they work; there are the skew-sails of barges urging slowly home in the twilight

— all the romantic riverine business is here. But no! The drift of fashion has left this spacious theatre bare; the Empolitani shuffle in procession up and down that very street where they are slaves every day of the week; and Nunziata, who will trundle a mop here to-morrow, must be unknown to Olinto, to whom to-morrow she may laugh her "buon dì." Such are the Sunday diversions of a town which once held the fate of Florence within its walls. For it was in this very Empoli that they held a council —

> After the havoc and the rout
> Which tinctured gules the Arbia's wave;

and here Farinata degli Uberti, exiled Florentine though he was, "with his face gravely perturbed," says Villani, up and spoke his piece in her defence:

> Alone I was, there in that place
> Where every will saw Florence razed,
> I on her side with open face.

This is the account he makes of it to Dante; and it seems to have been true. He shook his fist at Provenzano Salvani, the great Sienese captain, whose mind was that Florence should be laid level with the ground, and whose eloquence had nearly moved the council to agree with him. "If that beast," says Farinata — and one can read the scorn

EMPOLI.

of one city for the other trembling in his deep tones — "If that beast tread not out the fire he has kindled, I will build him a cage whence he will never get loose; and such a bonfire will I heap round about it that he will never live to quench it." No doubt he meant what he said, and no doubt was able to have performed it. The upshot was that they made a peace at Castelfiorentino in Val d' Elsa, which lasted just as long as such pacts usually did: to be exact, not six years. Benevento followed at just that interval of time, Tagliacozzo two years later. Farinata, who had enabled Florence to win those two battles and so recover what she had lost, was (as a consequence) further from her than he had ever been. *Tantæne animis!* So great a race and such little wars! I think one must be strongly enamoured of the drums and trumpets of history to care for such toy symphonies.

The Val d' Elsa: Castelfiorentino.

To those who love Wordsworth's "pastoral melancholy," and in low grey hills and willows about a sluggish grey brook can reap their quiet harvest, the long road by Elsa, from Empoli to Boccaccio's town, will need no enhancing. To bolder spirits it will be redeemed by the sense of adventure which never fails the traveller when, by how slow degrees soever, he leaves the plain —

and by two sights justificatory. Castelnuovo huddled on a cliff exactly big enough to hold it, is one, and the other is Capanaiolo with a tall Pucci villa. Hereabouts, also, let me tell the humorous, they lead pigs by a string and collar round the neck — and do no better.

THE PIAZZA, EMPOLI.

Of Castelfiorentino, a precipitous town full of children, dust, and flies, there is nothing so comfortable to say. It is well-looking from without, but within cavernous and starved — like Dante's wolf —

Che di tutte brame
Sembiava carca nella sua magrezza.[1]

I think the people must have been veritably

[1] Whose gaunt ribs looked
A cage for all the lusts.

famished, for they crowded about us like desperate cats — hollow-eyed, patient, asking faces they had. This unspeakable endurance of the Tuscan poor — is there anything like it in the world? The sight of us to their fevered eyes — smug, sleek, broad-clothed foreigners that we were — would have egged Lancashire on to murder and Paris to ghoul's work. These people looked their hunger, said nothing, and bore no grudges. Theirs is one of those cases where a lower town has gathered about the highway and the rails, and left the old stronghold to itself. The Castello, the Podestà, the Cathedral, the wonder-working Madonna, the old apparatus of township, are derelict on the hill, where once upon a day they were all to all. There must be a dozen churches — all as dead as King Pandion — in that dead town. Shops with nothing to sell, and old women who lack the means of buying, are to be seen there, and faded children languidly playing in the gutter. They are querulous, too, like little convalescents after fever. But there are palaces in the streets, and the fortress-houses of an older generation, and frescoes dropping flake by flake, and grease on dumb altars a hundred years cold. It is ill-work dying on a hill-top; but to live there if you can must be good. You come to a tougher stock than Castelfiorentino, with much hardy green wood in it still,

if you are patient of a few more miles of dull road. A turn in this, round the shoulder of a brae, reveals a bluff of sandstone rock, a headland thrust far out into the valley; upon it stands a ruddy town, with heavy old red towers, three or four. You will find a hale growth up there — or certainly I did. That is Certaldo, where Master John Boccas, as our betters called him, "a right worthy clerk," was alive and dead on December 21, 1375. Look to the right of it — but far to the right. Among folded hills, blurred by the heat, stand up the shafts of San Gimignano; and so one old town watches another, while you may wonder at two.

You may wonder at three, if you please, though the third is a spirit. High above Certaldo, on the watershed between Elsa and Pesa, lay — and still lies buried, so they say — the wondrous city of Semifonte: absolutely once there, and now absolutely vanished. The mind storing little of it, the fancy can build at large. Castles in Spain — castles in Semifonte! It may have been Etruscan, Roman, Longobard, Gothic, Frankish — *chi lo sa?* The first strife that ever fell out between Florence and Siena was before its walls. That was an eleventh-century affair, and even then it was said to have been a splendid town. In another two

Lost Semifonte.

hundred years it was destroyed, and so effectually that not a stone was left behind. This is a fate too extraordinary for any cities save those of the plain; I give it as it is told, but I cannot believe it. Deep under the grass sod Semifonte must be lying, as I picture it, body-perfect, awaiting the resurrection of us all. At that tremendous hour when Charlemagne shall walk forth from the Untersberg, shaking his long sleep from eyes and hair, and Arthur be brought back in his barge of queens from Avilion, the hillside of Petrognano will open her mouth, and we shall see the spires and domes of Semifonte — the gonfalon floating from the towers of the signiory — the cathedral doors open for Mass — all shall be as it was before. What a city to visit! The Rocca, quadrangular citadel "beautiful and inconceivably strong," the Porta Grande of cut stone: the tower of it — Torre del Leone — two hundred and thirty feet high, having a gallery wreathed about it, all of arches upon marble columns, and on the top a grey stone lion of colossal size, who held in his paws the banner of Semifonte. Here had been sights. There were fountains of abundant water cut and arcaded into the rock, and others which coursed down the streets in marble conduits; there were forty churches, monasteries, palaces of the greater clergy, strongholds of the chiefs; one can

conceive the rest. That were a city to visit — which had never known the Medici, nor the

PONTEDERA.

neo-classicists, nor sixteenth-century surfeit — Benvenuto Cellini, John of Bologna, Paolo Giovio and all his crew; nor seventeenth-century

simulacra — fair white tombs full of putrid bones; nor eighteenth-century pomatum — Metastasio and his fellow-jigsters. Semifonte would arise a perfect whole and clean, from the days of Pisa's great building, and Lucca's — a *revenant* from strong old times, like Ogier the Dane, when men were men before they could hope to be poets, and painters did not take themselves to be prophets, and God and the devil were as near at hand as Emperor and Pope. Cities came and went, and quicklier in Tuscany than elsewhere. "*Se tu riguardi Luni ed Urbisaglia, Come son ite*," says old Cacciaguida to Dante. The sea left some to wither on dunes, the land swallowed up others inch by inch, but Semifonte went out like the dream of a night. So splendid, and so to vanish! I am content to believe any marvel you may have to tell me of Semifonte.

Certaldo, Boccaccio's town.

To return to Certaldo. There is a lower town there, as at Castelfiorentino, and much business done about the railway station; inns also there are, highly favoured by bagmen. Commerce is a snug jade o' these days. For you and me, whose traffic is with more impalpable bales, who have "intelletto d' amore" and such like, we can leave our carriage there, and walk up a stepped path — paved like a mill-race and worn as smooth — to the old town

and the citadel. Boccaccio's birth and death place, which I saw not without a pulse for his jolly sake, is all red and brown-purple, has a castellated Palace of the People, ragged battlements, barbicans, loggias, belfries — all good old wind-wasted things. His own house, *la di lui casa* as they say (rather, as they write), has a tower, one of the two fine ones left, from the top of which you can see San Gimignano showing off five of her thirteen giants, and the snaky road by which you must presently travel to reach them. Catamount's nest that it is, Certaldo's streets go round about the rock like sentinel's walks, and can never know a cart-wheel. Plodding mules, with tender feet and ears drooping like tassels to the ground, carry up firing and corn-meal and yarn for the looms. Other provand than this the true Certaldesi leave to the *bourgeois* below, and grow sleek upon their hard-fetched fare. Their women are handsome, as they ought to be, with green eyes, dusky skins, fair, tangled hair. They carry themselves bolt upright, like all mountaineers, but with better reason than most, for their figures are remarkable. The men sing gay songs, are happy and free-mannered; and if Boccaccio is not at the bottom of that, the deuce is. If you set these deductions down to my fancy you will be wrong. I saw here what I have never

seen elsewhere in all long Italy, a man stop and kiss a girl in open street. No offence either. He was a baker, who came — a floury *amorino* — saw, and considered the bend of her industrious head, and stooped and kissed her as she sat sewing at her door. Her lovers and acquaintances about her saw nothing amiss, nor was she at all put out. After so flagrant an achievement the madcap went a whole progress of gallantry down the street, none resenting his freedoms. He danced with one good wife, chucked another's chin, and lifted a third bodily into the air, singing all the while. You see these feats in old prints now and then — in Callot, for instance, though very rarely in Italian prints (never, I believe, in Zocchi) — they are almost inconceivable in real life, yet here seemed fitting enough. It was allowed that the baker was *un po' allegro*, but clearly in this town they hold to the opinion of their great man that "bocca baciata non perde ventura." There is nothing to be seen in Boccaccio's house but what is outside it, so to say; the great open view of the downs, the incidents of the cheerful street. It is quite otherwise with the Palazzo del Commune, a Gothic structure in red brick and stone facings, of the Sienese type. The Custode's wife is very proud of her charge. She exhibits in the court a whole nosegay of painted shields. Here

are Ridolfi, Capponi, Pucci of Florence — bygone Podestàs; here are Guinigi of Lucca, Visconti of

CERTALDO, BOCCACCIO'S HOUSE.

Milan, Tolomei, Piccolomini, Salimbeni of Siena. "All this fine blazonry," says she, "points to a

time when Certaldo was a great city, like Siena"; and here is one of many cases where a place, always dependent upon Florence, has been inviolably attached to the southern city by the heart-strings. The remains of fresco, too, in church and chapel and hall, point to the same thing. Grave, full-throated Sienese Madonnas, blue cloaks over their brocades, preside at assemblies of doctors, seraphic and militant. Saint Catherine with her pinched and faithful face is much here, San Michele in Roman greaves and breastplate, the languorous works of Sodoma and his tribe — all crumbling, and all the better, I think; but all tending to Siena. One has left the Florentine dominion; one has come into the south. Florence governed all the south, but Siena reigned.

A weir in Elsa.

From across a weir in Elsa you can see how boldly Certaldo heaps itself up, and how its house-walls, continuing the planes of the rock, make curtains of defence against escalade. As I watched it, eating my bread and white cheese in the flecked shade of poplars, there seemed a glow upon the place which proceeded from within. It was warm red, warm grey, warm yellow. Lichen covers the brickwork closely, and, like the gold-leaf which the old gilders used to lay upon red, is all the richer for the under-

tinge. This is where a road turns off to San Gimignano from the trunk which runs on to Colle and Siena — a delectable junction of shade and tumbling water made for the sweet uses of luncheon. By this very bend Boccaccio may have sat, and watched (as I did) the brown boys dip their legs in water and scream to each other as the trout leaped the weir. If he came when I did he would have exulted no less in the spring finery and chorus of nightingales, and have had more excuse than he seems to have sought for the opinion — which has been combated since his time — that this world is a garden. To what other end than man's solace and delight does this green water flow? Why, otherwise, is there a nightingale in every bright bush? Easy, hopeful, secure philosopher! Here, at any rate, it is good to be, eating bread and cheese, drinking red wine, taking breath for a larger air. We may pour libation here, and cry unto the amorous gods of Siena; for we are in their country by this, and have left the plodders of the Arno behind us. Henceforward our commerce must be in windier streets, and all the water we find will spring from the heart of rocks. We are in the way of Fontebranda and the Aqua Diana, with five steep miles before us to San Gimignano.

CHAPTER III

THE GHOSTS OF SAN GIMIGNANO

THE white mud which boils in the Bulicame of Viterbo, and served the loose women there for lustral water in Dante's day, is churned in the hills of Volterra, a few miles west of San Gimignano. A pilgrimage thither will take you into places whose desolation freezes the very office of the sun; travelling that road you will discover how this town of towers is built upon a green tongue of land pushed out into the drab Maremma. The dark bulk of a hill, the *Poggio Commune*, is the tongue's point, from which you can see at once the towers of San Gimignano, and Volterra keeping watch and ward over her grey leagues. The frontier-fortress of these ancient enemies, Castel San Gimignano, is on the further side of that hill. Better wine is not trodden in Tuscan vats than the clean red liquor you may buy

The lie of the land.

there.[1] But it is grown in the Chianti, and not where they crush the grapes; all the fruitful land lies to the east. Of this you may be assured by a dawn watch. Make your orisons early, rise before the sun, open your window and lean head and breast out into the shadowless, grey calm. Like great crested waves heaving to a shore, see the landscape tend towards the barrier hills. You are looking into the heart of Tuscany, if you are looking east. Elsa is below you, with woody sides, and Poggibonsi upon a little mound just across Elsa; the first wave-crest is the hither ridge of Chianti, then comes Radda in violet distance, then the further Chianti, a blue-black bar. Over that, but hidden, are Arno, running north for a space, Arezzo, and the Apennines. But between you and the first Chianti chain the land is hollowed out like a cup, which you may see on misty mornings filled to the brim with fleecy white. It breaks like surf against the bar; it has drowned Elsa and her little towns, Certaldo, Poggibonsi, Barberino, and the rest of them. Wait, however, and watch. To see the sun burn the top of the ridge, come glowing up behind it, and strike the cloud-sea with a broad path

[1] It was famous in the 16th century. "Di quindi," says Leandro Alberti, "si traggono buone Vernace da annoverare fra i nobili vini d' Italia." *Descrittione d' Italia.* Venice, 1588, p. 51.

of glory, is one of the sights of this place of faëry. It fits you for your day to come, and is the apocalypse of your night of mysteries. For San Gimignano is a spell-bound place; ghosts are about it by day, and the night is full of their voices.

I know of none whose outside show is more of a mask to its inside truth. Seen fairly from the long file of cypresses, which signifies your near approach to the Porta San Matteo, it looks to be of imposing ugliness, with a mountainous grandeur all its own. You think of storied heaps of ruin, derelict Baalbec, or Persepolis of gaunt propylons — "courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep." Blind towers, windowless houses, blank walls, present an inscrutable front: you think, a town cut in blocks, like something of the East, where men build against the sun. To enter the gate is to trust oneself to the uncouth companionship of giants. But not at all: the moment you are within you discover the truth. It is all gigantic still, but not monstrous, not humiliating; solemn and wonderful, rather, and silent, a place where beautiful pale people tread softly and never lift their voices, and dream-children, frail as breath and coloured as faintly as wood-flowers, come and stand about you, full of secret knowledge which they are forbidden to impart. The contrast

The truth and the seeming.

is extreme; an abode fashioned by Titans for

SAN GIMIGNANO.

themselves, inhabited now by a people for whom

the loggias and belvederes of Gozzoli's frescoes, all the delicate windless days of his fancy, would be the proper setting. The whole town is so much of a piece. You can well imagine it to have been hacked out of the solid by huge contrivers, a fortress dug from the live rock; the towers and square barbicans and double walls pared down to that semblance; open spaces cleared by force of the pick; and about these the streets drilled into busy tracery of tunnels, galleries, archways, stepways. From the piazza three such tunnels run steeply down into the dark; high on a broad stair a church-front stands sharply out; but above that you may see five, seven, eight monster towers, blank cubes of masonry, afforesting the sky. There is no ornament, no colour, no gradation between the white and the black. All is, in fact, one weathered silver or one hollow of dark, and all of one age. It sounds grimly, so described, yet it is anything but that. A friendly and gentle race inhabits it, but with so alien an air that you are apt to think them settlers in a deserted city, who have never ceased to be cowed by their enormous lodging. They are many sizes too small, and (as I read the books) so they have ever been. You will be wrong to think them the product of isolation and hunger, and their fragility a mountain anæmia. The history

of San Gimignano is all pathetic, all a faltered treble in the minor. Their gallantries — for they

S. GIMIGNANO.

were gallant — move tears rather than heart-beats. Their heroes can only be seen through a mist

of unavailing pity, and nowadays mournful birds sing their elegy. For they are famous, not for what they did, but for what they suffered. Their hierarch is Santa Fina, a precocious little macerating baggage of thirteen, pretty to death, as they say, who found a kind of still ecstasy rotting on a plank. Sienese by instinct, predilection, and the lie of the land, they fell a-quarrelling with Volterra in early days, and bickered ineffectually for a hundred and fifty years. The natural result flowed beautifully true. In mid-fourteenth century Florence assumed the lordship and never let go.

Painted chivalry and the facts.

There is very little chivalry in all this; nothing of a kind, for instance, which would have inspired that most chivalrous poet, Messer Folgore of this place. He chose rather for Siena, the home of Tuscan chivalry, and the Spendereccia house, with its quaint gospel of clothes and frittering. It was to the "brigata nobile e cortese," which he found there, that he dedicated his high-bred, thin rhymes; to young men with such ruffling names as

> Tingoccio, Atuin di Togno, ed Ancajano,
> Bartolo, e Mugaio, e Fainotto.

He thought them, or said that he did, like Lancelot and the sons of King Ban of Benwick; but what is curious is that his feudal verses find

feudal illustration upon the walls of the Communal Palace here. There is a broad sheet of fresco, blue and gold, in this place, very much in the Sienese manner; but it was another hand which commented upon Folgore, an earlier hand, with an extraordinarily Norman touch. This shows

S. GIMIGNANO.

you a great chase in the doing, running dogs after a boar, huntsmen with spears and horns, a wooded mountain landscape, with white harts flying through the trees. On the adjoining wall an Ardinghelli, fat-jowled, shaven tyrant — Scolaio, of that stock, Archbishop of Tyre — stiff as William on the linen of Bayeux, receives tribute of the game. Men lead dogs in leash; there are

hooded hawks; near by a page holds his stallion by the bridle. Then a tournament. Knights in chain mail and surcoats of silk run a course with spears, then fight the sword-bout afoot:

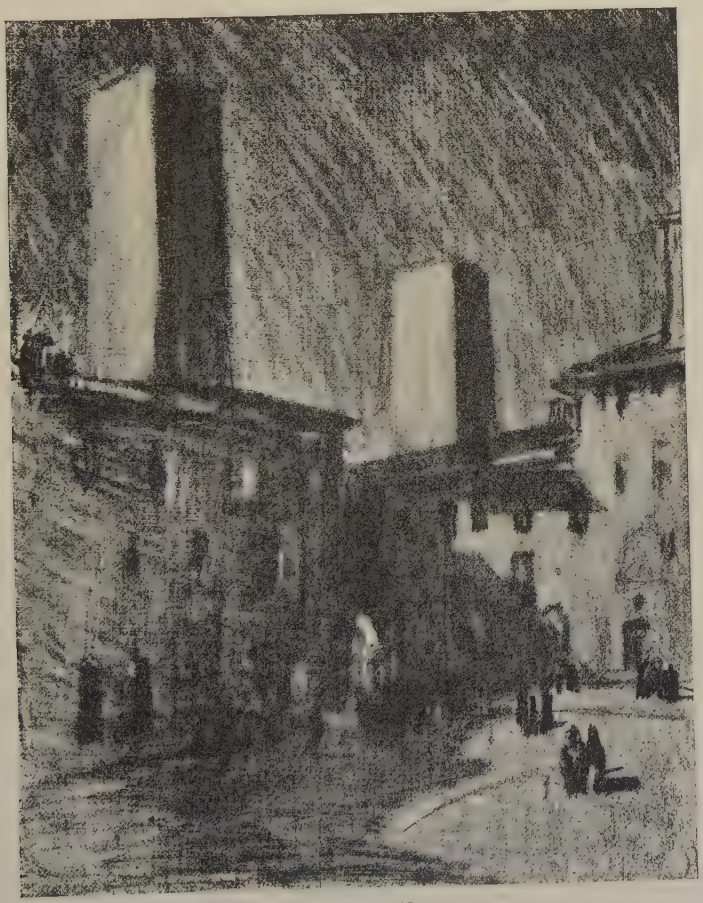
> Prodi e cortesi più che Lancilotto,
> Se bisognasse con le lance in mano,
> Fariano torneamenti a Cambelotto.

So sings Folgore, dazzled by the bravery of his spendthrifts; but the Camelot of his fancy and election was Siena, and the lists the flags of the Campo. Nor is prowess a word for the Ardinghelli either; so stoutly depicted here, they live in history as victims rather than heroes.

The Ardinghelli brethren.

They — of Norman origin as I suppose — and the Salvucci did the fighting, which no Tuscan city ever failed of, or failed to pay for in the long run. Their towers are standing, a couple to each name, but their houses are gone. Cheek by jowl they reared up in the Piazza and sustained vendetta for two centuries. Then a deed was done — it was in 1352, just before the Florentine occupation — which drowned their puny hatreds in innocent blood. Benedetto Strozzi, a Florentine, was Podestà, who, upon unjust suspicion, fostered (as the suspects believed), by whisperings of the Salvucci, seized by night and imprisoned two brethren of the Ardinghelli. Primeranno and Rossellino were their flowery

names; one may suspect them of beauty. On this account or another, but probably on this (for

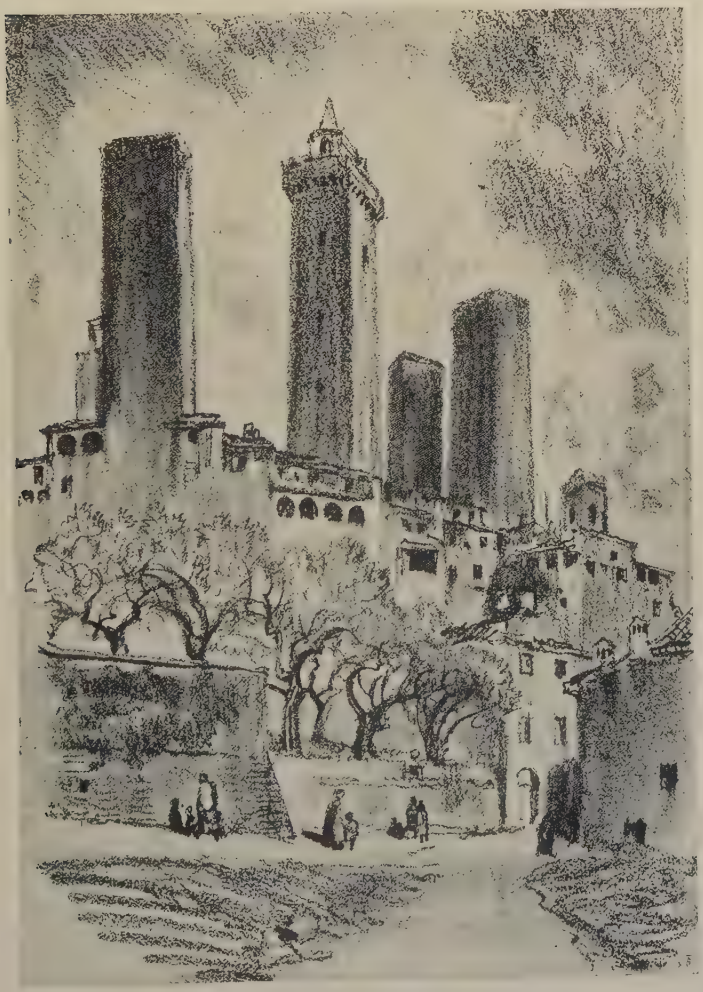


S. GIMIGNANO.

the Tuscans always suffered handsome tyrants gladly, and the standard of beauty was not high),

the two lads had lovers in the town, to one of whom one of them threw a letter from the window of his prison. Word was then sent to Florence of Strozzi's doings, petitions went, warnings, entreaties, which had their effect. The priors were unwilling to risk extremities, knowing, perhaps, their Strozzi. At any rate they sent him a letter of reprieve by a messenger on a good horse. Further communication passed between the boys in gaol and the San Gimignanesi; Strozzi intercepted one of these, and determined to act. He visited his victims at midnight, and told them they were to die within four hours. Die they did, by decollation, before their own house in the Piazza. An hour or so late came in the reprieve, delayed by a flood in Elsa. Reprisals followed upon this hasty murder. The Ardinghelli rose one night, fired the palace of the Salvucci and drove the owners into the hills, there to couch with the fox. Some of them sought out foxes of another sort, and went to Florence with their griefs. This was just what Florence had desired. She arrayed a host, marched up the Val d' Elsa and the long hill from Certaldo in great strength. Five years' seigniory and a Podestà permanently of Florentine choosing were the wages of this day's work. Within a year — mark the irony of the thing — *on the motion of the*

Ardinghelli, Florence was asked to take the

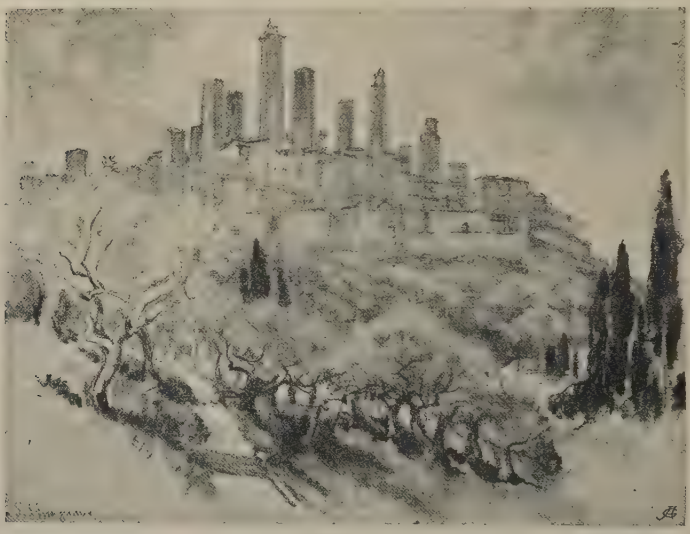


S. GIMIGNANO.

lordship altogether. She did. That fortress on

Monte Staffoli, the citadel which commands the whole town, is her work.

Now, at night, from the ghostly towers the owls tell the watches with startled, haunting cries. *Kiou!* falters one in a lonely treble, and *Kiou!* comes from afar, like the sudden sob of a child



S. GIMIGNANO.

hurt. These are the uneasy sprites of Primeranno and Rossellino Ardinghelli grieving each to other as they re-enact their last night upon earth. Other voices in the dark are to be heard, but none so forsaken as these. Watchmen stray round about the walls heartening each other every hour. "All' erta, sentinello!" you hear close at hand.

Wait a little, and catch the distant assurance of

WASHING-PLACE, S. GIMIGNANO.

the other, "All' erta sto!" But the owls repine

without ceasing: a patient iteration which touches the heart, not because the sorrow is so great, but because the mourners are so small.

La Miseria.

I never saw a town so poor with a folk so gentle under their misery. Every one asks, but nobody begs — that is, they wait near by, searching your face with their immense eyes, saying nothing, hoping against hope that you will read and understand their necessity. "La miseria fa vendere ogni cosa," said a poor gentlewoman to me one day. She lived in the corner of one vast room of a palace: a fresco was on the wall, which was what I had come to see. I think she was not without hopes that, in my magnificent foreign way, I should lay down a roll of banknotes, and send in workmen to chip out the painting from the wall. If these were her dreams she did not utter them, but it was not hard to see that she was prepared to sell her shelter from the wind. That palace of hers — for it was her own! A great approach through a gateway into a courtyard, a flight of shallow, marble stairs to the *pian' nobile*, and then that long bare hall with coffered ceiling, two fireplaces (but never a fire), frescoed walls, all the garniture of the old noble life, and this poor soul encamped in it with a deal table, a chair, and a paraffin lamp for all her service. Works of the Florentine

masters are not to be seen on these terms: there was nothing to be done but bend the head and go. I left on tiptoe, as if I had ignorantly trespassed upon a mystery. And had I not? Was she not a figure of the San Gimignanesi trembling in this city of towers too big for them?

GATE, SAN GIMIGNANO.

One more act of this tragic pageant — for play you cannot call it where it is all in dumb show. Standing on the steps of the inn, considering the various little diversions of the piazza — gossips at the well, a policeman being shaved on the pavement, the nearing bells of the *diligence* from Poggibonsi, and what not — I became aware of a

very old man bowing bareheaded before me. He was in such rags as a scarecrow could not maintain in my country, but he had silver-white hair. His hat was in his hand; he bowed down before my splendour — God forgive me — as if I myself had been a god. I was humiliated to the dust. If by any shocking act of insult or contumely I could have stung him into dignity I declare I would have done it. Anything to make him hold up his head, cover it, and put me in my place. But no! A silver-haired old man, purified by eighty years' lustration in the waters of misery, he bowed himself down to me, and I could only escape by degrading him still lower. I suppose I gave him money; he blessed my lordship as he went away. "Italy," thought I, "is abased like thee. All the glories of her name and blood; Cæsar's empery, Peter's throne, the immortal eyes of Dante, the wine of Beatrice's spirit, are set out, as on a huckster's tray, to be so many lures for our shillings. Italy is upon the town, trades her beauties, and cherishes them only that they may fetch the more. We, therefore, who ought to make our prayer of humble access on our knees before we dare lift our eyes to her immortal shape, saunter through her cities with lorgnettes, doubt if Giotto painted this, think he might have bettered that, and measure the fingers and toes of

San Gimignano.

Baldovinetti's angel-children to see whether they are the fruit of wedlock or bastardy!" So it is, then, that San Gimignano is all Italy in small. The treasure of old sorrow is so sacred a thing that one can hardly dare look full upon it, I think. But Italy offers it for sale or hire. You can buy your share in it from Cook and Sons, and Herr Baedeker has engrossed the catalogue. *La miseria fa vendere ogni cosa.*

"The earth and every common sight."

And here am I, who ought to be glossing Herr Baedeker's text, railing at my stock-in-trade. I shall not be his scholiast here because the things which he did not see seem to me so much more precious than those which he did see. He saw the museum, but I saw the custode of it, a very noble priest. He saw the fresco, but I its poor, patient proprietress. He saw the inn and said it was a good one. So it is; but I saw the innkeeper's pretty daughter, and was witness to the unuttered, unutterable passion of the waiter for her. Afflicting torment! It was highly detrimental to the service. If I forbear to speak of this tragi-comedy, and pass it over for some of the master-pieces of the Florentine school which fill two churches here, it is not because I think these latter are so much to the purpose in San Gimignano — for indeed they are

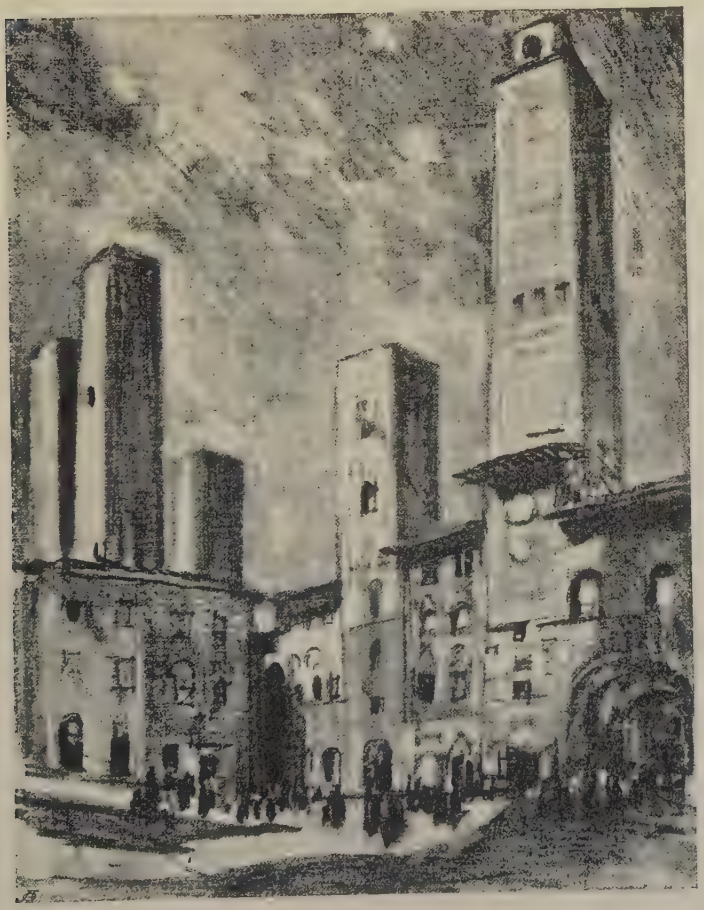
far from the purpose — as things which are the efflorescence of the very soil and air;[1] but rather that I may speak of Santa Fina, and yet again in praise of the incomparable Ghirlandajo, who has dignified her maudlin legend beyond belief, and made a beautiful and tender little drama out of the clot-brained ecstasies of the hagiologist.

Let no one henceforward refuse Ghirlandajo the name of poet. This is what he has done here. The acts of Santa Fina are written at large in a little octavo, — "Ragguaglio istorico della vita, miracoli e culto immemorabile della gloriosa vergine Santa Fina di Sangimignano raccolto a consolazione de' suoi divoti e dedicato alla medesima Santa da Pietro Paolo Maria de' Medici, nobil Patrizio e Accademico Fiorentino," — where you may find within that flood of verbiage which only an Italian can command, the thin wisp of weed which stands for the deeds of her short life. At two years old she was in the way of saintship, at four she began to fast; at eight a little boy gave her an apple at the well-head, and she took it: "Whereupon she was taken with great affliction, fear and horror at the fault, and lively prayed our

Santa Fina in legend.

[1] The point in which all centres is this, for the traveller: will he study Tuscany or the Tuscans? I do not hesitate to say that I find people more entertaining than pictures, and more germane to the matter of us all.

Lord Jesus Christ, with fervent orations and with tears, that He, by the intercession of His holy



S. GIMIGNANO.

Mother and the merits of the Pontiff Saint Gregory, to whom she bore particular devotion,

would inflict such pains upon her body that never more might she have occasion to sin. And this most urgent prayer of hers was heard by the Most High" — who smote her with extreme bodily infirmity, as you shall hear. At ten years old she took to her bed of board — five feet by two, and there she lay, rotting and rotting, until at fifteen she died. For she neither moved nor would be moved for common purposes of cleanliness: "per la qual duro decubito attaccatasi la carne alla detta tavola, e venuta finalmente a marcirsi, oltre ai vermi che scaturirono dalla putredine quivi formata, vi concorrevano persino i topi a lacerarla, quando non vi era chi li discacciasse, conforme attestarono molte persone degne di fede, che in occasione di visitarla vedeano uscire detti animali dalle concavità, che rodendo avevano fatte in quella tormentatissima parte; soffrendo così e giorno e notte con generosa pazienza, come può credere ognuno, un complesso ben grande d' inusitati tormenti:" I excuse myself from translating these disgustful imaginings — as to which it may be added, for the sake of the curious, that worse are to be found in the book — and will add simply, that her mother died by act of devil and permission of God before the saint was at the end of her glorious decomposition; that Saint Gregory in splendour announced her own

approaching death; and that her nurse, one

PALAZZO PUBLICO, S. GIMIGNANO.

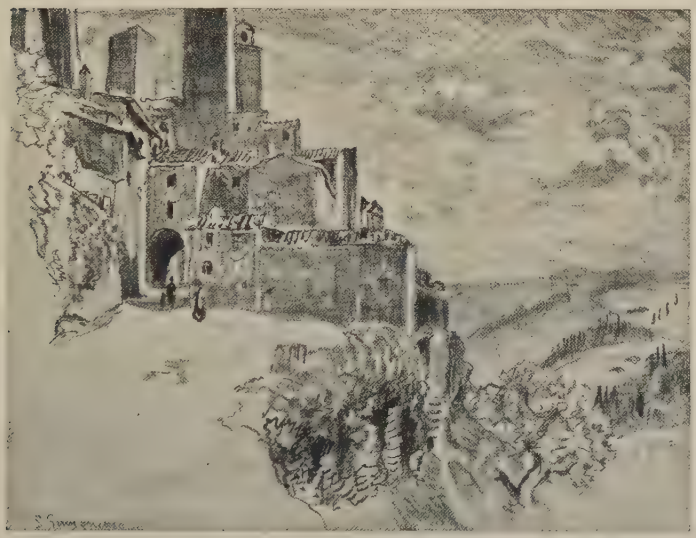
Beldia, through touching her corrupted body got

infection in the hand. Die at last she did, at fifteen years old — having done (on the hagiologist's own showing) nothing but rot —; and on the day of her death the bells of San Gimignano rang of themselves; and when they had got her off the plank to which she was loathsomely glued, she diffused unearthly, seraphic fragrance, and cured at a touch the stricken hand of Beldia. On my conscience there is no more. Now see what Ghirlandajo makes of it in his two frescoes.

Ghirlandajo's version.

As I read him, his Mystery is in two acts. The first is in the cottage, where Fina lies mortally stricken and on a plank bed, but exquisitely decent, with pure face, still body, and intent, feverish eyes. There is extraordinary solemnity, a hush, over the clean, whitewashed place, which is poor enough of all but the graces of the land. Outside the door are roses and the full sun; through the unglazed window you can see a dappled sky, blue distance of wooded hill. Saint Gregory floats in at the door in cope and mitre; cherubim are his acolytes, with inhuman, little burning faces; he gives his message, "Prepare thyself, daughter"; and Santa Fina never moves her bright eyes from his face. Hers is too desperate a case for astonishment; moreover, as one bedridden for many years, she has the egoism of the sick, and takes this

annunciation as her due. The old woman at her head, whose hand supports her, is not astonished either, but looks shrewdly at the apparition, as if suspicious. And in that she is a true cottage woman. She, too, accepts the



S. GIMIGNANO.

honour as her daughter's due. The other woman — for there are two sitting with the girl, on low stools by her bench — lifts her hand. She is startled, but no one moves. It is all hushed over with the coming of the shadow.

Santa Fina, says Ghirlandajo, did not die in the cottage, as the hagiologist reports, and there were no filthy ceremonies of rat-chasing or

rending blue flesh from boards. When they

THE WALLS, S. GIMIGNANO.

had brushed out her long rippling hair, and

clothed her in a thin silk gown from neck to feet, she was carried on a bier to a little oratory, and there with prayers and the chanting of boys'

S. GIMIGNANO.

voices she lay and waited for the Bridegroom, herself the meek and fair bride. In due course the light of day became an offence and her eyelids a burden; so she closed them, and began the last vision. Frightened a little, a little needing her mother, she reached out a hand, and

found what she needed. It was her last act; for as she did it, she sighed — and that was all. Now, while all this was doing, an angel of God flew from tower to tower and set the bells ringing — but softly, lest the San Gimignanesi should think Volterra was come upon them unawares. Ghirlandajo saw him at it, a trim little figure, cleaving the blue with crisp wings, hovering a moment — like a white butterfly — as he touched a bell, then flitting to the next tower.

> The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde
> In this delightful land of Faëry,
> Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
> And sprinckled with such sweet variety. . . .

If Ghirlandajo, the old shop-keeping artist, could sprinkle the unholy spawn of cloister-thoughts, it was because he was a poet without knowing it. All honour to him!

Another highly poetical piece may not be omitted: I mean Benozzo's fresco in Sant' Agostino. It is one of many by this delightful contriver, for he has set out in candid order the whole story of that gloomy hero, from the age when he was spanked to that at which he was received into heaven; but charming as these are — full of cavaliers, ladies, and pretty boys in the most delightful architecture out of Mr. Buzzard's bride-cake

Benozzo.

shop — there are better of the sort at Pisa, which

COLLEGIATE CHURCH, S. GIMIGNANO.

illuminate, moreover, wholesomer stories. But

over the Sebastian altar is a very different affair, wherein Benozzo has shown his seriousness for once, and done what I have never seen attempted before or since. There has been — there is in progress — a pestilence, whereunder the people sicken suddenly, stiffen, and die. Sebastian in blue stands upon his tomb with a host of devotees clinging, kneeling, crying, raving about him. Angels crown him and break arrows in the sight of God omnipotent, who with His chivalry about Him and the Holy Ghost in His lap, Himself holds an arrow, as acceptable tribute from His servant.

But — the plague not stayed — before God kneel Christ and his mother, wooing His high clemency. Christ shows his wounded side — "Father, see where they pierced me. Stay now, therefore, Thy hand: let my torment suffice!" But Mary — the meek girl stung at last — with a gesture of extraordinary passion and pride, rips open her bodice and lays bare her bosom. "By these breasts whereon Thou didst hang — save the San Gimignanesi." The appeal cannot be gainsaid. I never saw a thing so daring done so well. It is exactly another of those little strokes of real imagination which lifts shop-keeping Benozzo, with shop-keeping Domenico his neighbour, out of the rank of tradesman to

that of poet. Such a thing ill done has immortalised many worse painters than Benozzo Gozzoli.

This apart, Sant' Agostino is a fine bare preacher's church, of the barn-roof order (as it should be), with a mort of dead Austin friars in low relief upon the pavement. Opposite the door of entry is a great piece — the Adoration of the Cross — with a fine landscape of the Arno and Pisa spread about it.

[NOTE. — The traveller shall remark in the Collegiate Church of this town two wooden statues by the door — as to which, if he care to know it — I have something to say at the end of the next chapter.]

THE VILLA BŒCKLIN, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER IV

VOLTERRA

A TALL shepherd, motionless upon the verge of a bare hill, frightened my vetturino badly. One saw the creature stand up there like a weather-tossed old tree, in severe isolation against the sky, with something long, and thin, and straight under his arm. It proved to be an umbrella, which might well have been a gun; certainly, if landscape has anything to do with the procreation of brigands, a gun it should have been. For after leaving Castel San Gimignano and the deep woods which come next — woods which clothe the sides of gorges, woods of dense boscage and wet spaces, of grey shale, black ilex, cyclamens, and ever-falling water; after climbing to Spicchiaiola, and resting there in the shade in communion with the curate's niece — *familiarmente trattando* with this amiable woman over a flask of the curate's wine; after such-and-such comfortable assurances of all being

Pathetic fallacy.

well, the country side changed for the worse, grew bald and sinister, as if a blighting wind had swept over it; and instead of smiling, grinned. The sun was not hidden, yet ceased to shine; the sun stared. Hearts might well sink and nerves go taut. The landscape was hostile,

THE ROAD TO VOLTERRA.

inspiring terrors; the pathetic fallacy — prodigious egotism, only possible to poets and the Hebrews of old — was never so plausible. Trombino, from sitting squarely on his box, looking comfortably at his horses' wagging ears, and flicking them when he could with his whip, was now all eyes and ears of his own. *Brutto paese!* but he meant more than that. He was off his balance;

no longer a disposer, but a huddled thing to be disposed of. Every dreary heave of that pale wilderness spoke to him of menace, of adverse gods, of earth estranged and ourselves forsaken, cowering in the midst. He was all agog for alarms; Pan had resumed his mastery, had this once jaunty fellow at his mercy, and could have palsied the heart of him and cloven his tongue to palate by any sudden shock. Say, there had been a *cacciatore* in those wastes who, pursuing finch or thrush to the utterance, should have let off his piece, Trombino would have tumbled to his prayers. But no sound broke the heavy suspense; the sick land lay stupid, clammy with fear. Trombino drooped, the whip drooped, the horses crawled like lice.

The awful form of the man on the hill, rigidly waiting, changed all this; or, rather, embodied it. The landscape had found its voice; here was something more wearing to stretched nerves than a sudden ambush.

"*Con rispetto parlando*," said Trombino from his perch, "there on that hill-crest awaits us a brigand. Momently we are all dead men."

There is only one attitude to assume with a Tuscan servant upon occasions of difficulty or stress, that of cheerful permanence, of inexorable, but benevolent, order. *Avanti* is the word for

the road — otherwise, why is one there? Therefore ——

"*Sempre avanti, Trombino,*" said I; and counted, not without confidence, upon his fine manners.

"*Come lei crede,*" said Trombino, and urged his beasts towards the brigand. "*Avanti, hep!*" — he cracked his whip till the spell-bound welkin rang. Good soul, with exactly the same words and act he would have obeyed me though the Chimæra had stood fire-belching in his road. Nay, had the earth yawned and discovered him a pit of blackness, *Avanti* from me had made a Quintus Curtius of him. It made no difference at all that the brigand resolved into a musing shepherd.

Monte della Torre.

You pass a tower on the left, shortly after leaving a wayside calvary and gipsy camp. A tower, do I say? Such as it is, it stands on a hill of its own, dominating the desolation, the picture of maimed nudity; for whereas it was square once and looked out with a bold face to all the airts, now but a single wall stands up to speak of a thousand years' attacks. In 925, as I read the books, King Hugh gave to Bishop Adelard the Monte Della Torre, with this tower then upon it, to be a warning to the San Gimignanesi; who countered,

I suppose, with their castle some eight miles to the east — that Castel San Gimignano where they sell clean wine, a Vernace with a fame as old as the fortress. And all these things are in a concatenation accordingly. San Gimignano, abode of gentler misfortune, makes a wine-shop of its outpost: Volterra, snarling wolf that can never be tamed to turn a spit, stands at its sentry-go and crumbles brick by brick as the weather will have it, and snarls at every wound. But I digress, if Volterra will not. Hereafter a little, from a higher ground, you will see that the lowlands which stretch away to the south have not been blighted with the accursed fate of the city. Soft purple valleys are enfolded down there; a floating haze over all gives you the thought that there stirs an enchanted sea, whose islands are the little hills, each crowned with a glimmering burgh. I saw Pomarance — Heavens, the Arabian name! — and nearer in, Casole d' Elsa, Monte Guidi, San Dalmasio. Next to Semifonte, which nobody can ever see, because it lies buried in the bosom of a grey down, I regretted Pomarance, which perforce I left, red and misty in the south, while I climbed ever higher to harsh Volterra. Round the naked knee of a hill I had my first view of it. Trombino pointed it out: "*Ecco Volterra!*" If he added not his *Deo gratias*,

I mistake him. It lay in the afternoon, in the sun's eye, as they say, upon what seems to be the highest of these mountains of mud, and presented an extraordinarily squalid appearance. I quarrel with other of Macaulay's images: he loved rhetoric too well, I doubt. Cortona could

VOLTERRA.

never have lifted a diadem of towers to heaven in any pre-eminent way. It lies now, where it must have lain from old-time, like a cemetery strewn upon a hillside. And so here, his "lordly Volaterræ" shows at first view a squat heap of brown building and one or two stunted towers, posts for cattle to scratch at. This is not a city which could ever have looked lordly, for it climbs

the apex of its hill and falls down, more than half, on the other side; so that from whatever point you make your approach there is none of the culmination which a hill-town should have. The great fortress by the gate impresses itself upon you as you draw near; monstrous bulk, monstrous strength, such dignity as consists with mass, it has. The huge walls are of a piece; work of giants, titanic, but not lordly. Etruscan heads directed all this immensity; what goaded slave-hordes wrought it, I know not. It looks as inert and spiritless as convict labour; gloomier Etruscan stronghold Herr Baedeker can never have seen. Fiesole is savage, Chiusi mournful, Perugia a termagant; Volterra has the dulness of the brute.

Terrific apparition.

You do but get a premonition of it as you climb the weary leagues into the town, and have no time to enlarge it, since you are to be shocked again. When the sinister country has you fast, when your spirits have flagged to their lowest, suddenly, a huge blood-coloured cliff confronts you, clothed in scrub to the peak, the Mons Tumba of this muddy waste. Backed by a storm-cloud, abode for vampires and snakes, spell-struck into silence, it terrifies you. It is as if all your flying fears, winging to a point, should take shape: a bare grey land, a storm

brewing in the north, and a blood-red cliff dead in your way. Thus fared knights-errant in the old tales when they took their lives in their hands. "And Pereduc journeyed three days and three nights over the desert. And he came to a great mountain in the midst, which was as red as blood, and hight Pavidus." "*Brutto paese!*" quoth Trombino, a snug youth for choice.

Bevis of Hampton.

John Villani, most friendly of historians, always on the look-out for the letter of introduction to antiquity, says that Volterra was first called Antonia, and that, "according to the romances," here we have the origin of the good Beuves of Antonia. By this long bow-shot he arrogates to the Volterrani our English hero, the late-born, the chaste, the pudibond Bevis of Hampton, whom Drusiane (much to his confusion) kissed under the table. I believe he got his story from the "Dittamondo," where, Fazio says,

> We saw Volterra near by this
> On a great hill, as strong and old
> As any town of Tuscany's,
> Antonia hight, whence, I am told,
> Came Bevis, who, for Drusiane's sake,
> Oversea suffered heat and cold.

I cannot agree with this poet, holding, as I must (in first-rate company), that the hero was of Southampton. The "Reali di Francia," a hostile

witness, says that all England rejoiced at his birth. It is true that the faithful tutor of the child, according to the same authority, was called Sinibaldo dalla Rocca San Simone, which is not a Hampshire name; and it may well be that this *rocca* was the lurid bluff on the road to Volterra before which I am keeping you horrific while I muse. Now I have never learned the name of this bluff; but if Sinibaldo (whom we call Saber) was lord of it, there was a great education for young Bevis, and the wicked Duodo of Maganza might have had old besieging it. But these, perhaps, are not practical speculations.

Once past this fatal place you have the grim bulk of the *fortezza* towering over your way. As my own *cortège* crawled up, I remember that a little company of madmen strayed about us, going slowly homewards to Volterra — fit pinfold! — herded by one man in a Government cap. He seemed glad of my company, so I conversed with him a little. His madmen were very old, but had, he told me, all been homicides in their day. Solitary confinement had done its work; they would lay hands suddenly on no other men. So the law allows them to roam at will, to pick wild-flowers and twist garlands for their white pows: a peaceful ending to their labours. They looked upon us,

The madmen.

our equipage and advance, with mild unwondering eyes. Once we had been grist for their long knives, but now were less than the flowers in the hedgerow. After life's fitful fever . . .

A straggling suburb succeeded, a row of drab houses, a cheerless *trattoria* with unglazed

VOLTERRA.

windows, pigs, chickens, children, stern-faced women in men's hats — here are disjected notes. A diligence came tearing down the hill, full of scared pale people escaping from Volterra; but we crept ever upwards and trailed painfully by the walls, the watch-tower, the great boulder of the fortress, and entered the doomed city by the Florence Gate. Trombino flogged the horses

into a feeble canter, and brought us up to the door of the old inn with some sort of a rattle.

> Cut a thin reed from scream-beset Scamander
> For hazard of this music!

No one came out to receive us. It might have been a dead-house; and so it was. Wind-tortured abode of madmen and grey murderers! Heart of earthquakes, fallen, still falling Volterra! It wanted but this. But I must endeavour to be calm.

To our notions — whose inns are as good as our hotels are bad — there is no comfort, but much hospitality in a Tuscan inn. At Volterra, the fact is that I had neither; but there were reasons. Mr. Carmichael, in a recent and agreeable work, shows that he found something to his taste. His landlord, however, was not dying of typhoid as mine was. To me all Volterra was exactly accursed, from the landlord to the land. A raw sea-mist was blown upon a searching wind through all the corridors of the house. Mad old women whispered and chuckled to themselves in corners, pawing and patting, as it seemed to me, waxen figures of the stricken host. Now and then there came a scurrying of fear-fanned feet, now and then the clanking of pails, the sudden banging of doors. A daughter of the house was in tears, her

Volterra.

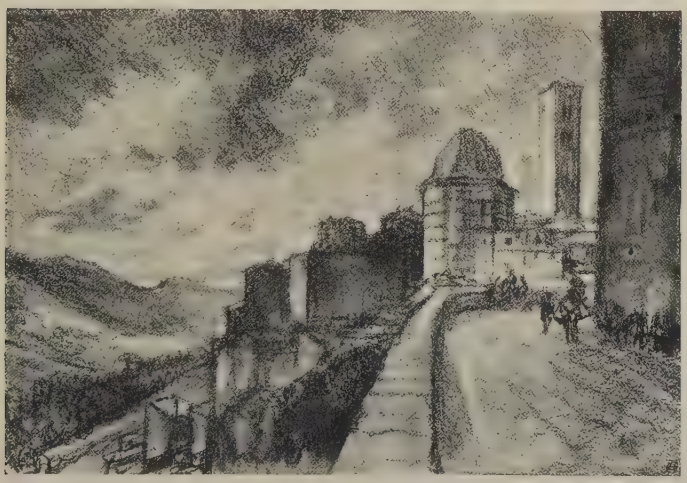
sister in hysterics; the doctor spat upon the floor, signifying his diagnostic pother. Death alone sat hale in the guest-chambers, and had bespoken the chief seat at the feast. Clearly, all these things were far from Mr. Carmichael, who was able to ruminate with unencumbered mind upon the Etruscans, the alabaster industry, and the landslip — as most pleasantly he does in his little Tuscan book. To me the gloom, the shadow, the cruel sea-wind with its tainted burden of fog, blighted the eyes, and perhaps struck a palsy upon the judgment. But I am by no means so sure that this, which has been foretold by the road, is not sealed to Volterra by history. Books are not alone in the world to have their weaving fates. Far more truly than they, towns speak the nature of men and their sort in this life. I can read the chronicles or not, as I choose, but cannot fail to read in dark and silent streets, in bare piazzas, and naked grey walls of ragged church and ragged palace, confirmation of the godless rule of wicked old prince-bishops. Hark to their names! Hildebrand, Ranier, Payn, and suchlike, implying all that was to follow: the treachery of the led against their leaders, eager to forestall that of the leaders against themselves; the black nightwork of Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Palla Strozzi, and that havoc which Lorenzo

wrought there when he killed man, woman, and boy, and the child at the breast — for which also, according to Savonarola's friends, he died without housel.

Of such is the history of Volterra. Its bishops were princes of the empire, stark men and Ghibellines, belying the fisherman.[1] To their tyranny succeeded that of a traitor-race, the Belforti, begun in treachery and ending by it. The Duke of Athens lorded it here for a year; but that was all the length of rope allowed him. He had time to build the Rocca Vecchia, and might, with a little more grace, have been its first tenant. The gods saw otherwise: he was not to die in prison. Florence, which in that fortunate year of hers (1254) had reduced Pistoja, beaten Siena in the open, and by that stroke secured Montalcino, Montennana, and Poggibonsi, had gone on from that last place across the frightful country to Volterra and had had it by luck — Florence then got her first taste of a city she was afterwards to sack three times before she could retain it for ever. Villani's tale of this capture is a good one. He says that the Florentines left Poggibonsi to come hither

[1] When a bishop was also a prince the world was too much with him; he was never for the Church, it seems. Arezzo had similar masters, Ghibellines to a man.

because Volterra was Ghibelline and the Guelphic League just then in ascendancy. There was no thought of taking, even of attacking, one of the strongest positions in Italy; if they could lay waste the country round about they would go home well pleased. But God, says Villani,



ON THE WALLS, VOLTERRA.

gave them victory suddenly, for the Volterrani, seeing the host close to their gates, with great pride and arrogance came flooding out — all their chivalry without order of war, or captains, or *battalia* — and fell upon the Florentines from the vantage of the hill. The Florentine knights, encouraging each other, singularly bold for such a timorous race, stormed

up and drove the offenders back upon their posts. All went streaming in, besiegers and besieged, fighting and hurtling together. The keepers of the gate, seeing (as they thought) their own people in confusion, had no care but to give them entry-room. In they came, and the Florentines with them. They secured the gates and the fortress as well. Thinking to have harried the *contado*, they found themselves masters of the city. The prince-bishop and clergy, cross in hand, came from the church to plead; handsome ladies came, their hair loose, crying for mercy and peace. It is to the credit of the Florentines, if it is true, that they did neither mischief nor spoil. They reformed the Signiory according to their Guelphish lights, banished the heads and chastened the members of the Ghibelline faction, and then went on their victorious way. This was their first hold upon Volterra. Lasting hold came in the fifteenth century, a grip thrice cemented in the citizens' blood.

The Volterrani.

Within this harsh stronghold beleaguered by the wind do dwell a stern, rock-faced people who take no notice whatsoever of the traveller, either to beg or to demand of him, either to rob him or to sell to him. This is so singular a thing that it deserves mention, if not repetition. It is the one place in Tuscany

where I have never been asked for a *soldo*, nor ever been informed that anything I might happen to look at was to be had for money. In San Gimignano, you may remember, a woman would have sold me the side of her house because I asked leave to look at a fresco; at Siena, one day, a

VOLTERRA.

wretch was to offer me a far dearer merchandise. Nothing of the kind here. Men and women go silently their ways, and which is which is hard to tell, for they dress their heads alike — first a felt hat, then a handkerchief over it, tied under the chin — and alike they have the square jaws and low foreheads of Romans. They are a stunted race, as the pines would be which could thrive upon the

stony ground and live out the salt gale which blows day and night. With their bullet-heads and stiff-angled drapery, I can see them on some Arch of Constantine or another, in severe relief, serried closely in battle-array, or about the altar of a household god. The piazza on market morning showed me just such an effect, when the buyers and sellers stood there in the fine rain, gleaming like old marbles, as expressionless and little wetted as they. What women! To woo a bride from Volterra would be to adventure among the Scythians. You would have to fight with your chosen maid — it would be an affair of muscles, tussles, and hard knocks. Having grassed her, you would throw her over your shoulder, like a dead stag, or a Lapith haled home by a Centaur, and so bear her to your house. *Et Venus in silvis*, indeed! One cannot, of course, be precise upon the point, yet there is every reason to suppose that, like the Amazons, these fierce virgins are maimed.

They wear Roman colours, deep and lurid; grass-green kirtles or sea-blue, orange shawls, orange and black kerchiefs. They carry little crescent sickles in their hands, tools whose use against anything but the person of the lover, or their own, it is hard to see. To buy and sell sickles, and for no other apparent purpose, they

hold a market in early morning in the Piazza of the Priors, a gaunt open space surrounded by great strongholds, the east end of the Cathedral being one, half smothered in a palace wall. Whiles, as the Scots has it, they go off to church, and hear masses, or pay uncouth worship to huge blind gods, roughed out of wood, and painted in their own colours — green, orange, crimson, and black. I believe *a fleshed sickle* is the most acceptable oblation a youth or maiden can pay. Such are the Volterrani, and such their gloomy delights.

A strange feature of the place is its general likeness to Florence. It is much what Florence might have become had some malign deity set it to shrivel and lose blood upon the top of a mud-mountain. From the ramp of a little piazza, which you will find not far from the Porta del Arco — between that and the Porta San Felice — you may look down upon a cascade of grey roofs descending to the plain, beyond which a broken headland juts into the sea. Just thereabouts, where the Cecina brook hopes to end its trouble, all is new and wild and beautiful. But if you look then behind you, upwards, you see the landmarks of a withered Florence — dome, baptistry, campanile; the Palazzo Vecchio, with its Tower of the Cow; beyond, again, the Bargello, with the

skeleton belfry. The illusion is for the moment complete, until you realise that the charm is not there. Then you see that the buildings want dignity, warmth, character; that they are a discord; that they do not represent Volterra so much as travesty Florence.

Nevertheless the Cathedral has an impressiveness of its own. It is on a grand scale, and has a ceiling of surpassing splendour. This is of wood, deeply coffered, enriched with figures in blue, green, and gold. The central square is held by the Spirito Santo encompassed in a cloud of seraphs. In octagons on all sides of him are saints, their heads tending towards him, their bodies from the middle downwards embedded in the wood. Here is a wonderful parallelogram of forces — bishops in golden copes and mitres, yellow-haired virgins in splendid brocades, deacons in dalmatics of white and gold — the saints in levee dress all yearning and spearing to their point of bliss: a fine conception, finely achieved. The august fowl seems to be hovering, more hawk than dove, and those others, witnesses and messengers of His, to get their swiftness from Him. They have strong and handsome faces, broad shoulders, deep chests, immense proportions; they must be twice the size of men, and any one of them would serve

Gods.

MARKET PLACE, VOLTERRA.

for figurehead to a line-of-battle ship. Imps of a race of giants, colossal divinities! To look on men and women at their prayers under the shadow of those burnished wings is to drift back to a day when it was universal belief that God made earth for His disport, gave it a flick to set it spinning, and then forgot all about it. The heavenly throng, busy with a vaster pageantry, was in full sight of men; yet man, except for some chance errantry from on high, had no existence there. But and if a straying son of God saw a daughter of man, that she was fair, then some beauty or another of ours, walking shyly the green ways of earth, would on a sudden be caught up in a gusty draught of enormous love, whelmed and lost in flame — and shine thereafter a lesser light in that high galaxy. Thus mankind, according to this theology, would fitfully preserve a clue to godkind.

But in a chapel of the south transept you can see the graven images of Volterra even better than in the nave. Up there, on the ceiling, you may have their theology; here, at kissing range, is their religion. It is figured by stiff and huge wooden gods dumbly enacting a scene from some blunt old tragedy. Though Herr Baedeker calls it a "Deposition from the Cross," it had far better stand for the Passion of Prometheus.

This group, one of the most extraordinary to be seen in Italy, is composed of figures nearly eight feet high, coloured in coarse crimson, blue, and green. One thinks not of the calm Olympians, but of their forerunners, "Kronos, and Gê, and murdered Ouranos," of monstrous revenges, vast pangs, before such a scene. The mystical dolours, reveries, and tender regrets of Christianity appear local. I suppose the piece cannot be earlier than the twelfth century in sober truth; but of this I am sure, that the fashioners of it, and those who fulfil their worship in its contemplation, are not of the new circumcision. No son of man hangs here, no handmaid of the Lord bewails him, nor a Joseph of Arimathy offers the hospitality of his new tomb. No! vast, blind forces writhe and suffer; these are cosmical throes; the sun goes down in blood into the sea, and earth stands by, passive and mute, as fixed as her own fate. So here it is that the fierce daughters of Volterra, sickles in their hands, come and offer dreadful self-sacrifice. And here a rock-browed son of the place, leading some virgin captive, espouses her with bloody rites.[1]

[1] Let not the traveller fail to notice, whithersoever he go in European countries, the wooden statues in churches. Art is not always a full-dress business; you are apt to get nearer to the root of the matter in the *borgo* than in the *piazza grande*. Roughly speaking, I do believe that the

homelier the stuff and the nearer to hand, the more expressive of emotion the art becomes. Thus, it is undoubtedly true that the Tanagra *figurini* tell you more of Greece than the great smooth marbles which stare through you out of their sightless eyes. In Italy, clay proved a happier material than bronze, and wood came very near to clay. In the museum at Pisa are some beautiful wooden figures of girls — slim, Gothic, low-bosomed creatures in white and blue gowns, with whom the traveller may come to terms at once. I know not what they represented first; but I felt in their company as a child with her household of dolls about her. I was at home with them; they are made of a stuff that once lived, fibrous stuff not different from myself, with marrow in it and sap, and much dependence upon the sun, the earth, and the wind. Whereas between stone, cut from the chill shoulder of the mountain, and me there is an unbridgeable gulf. And if I feel so in beholding, what must not the worker have felt as he wrought? To go on, at San Gimignano, by the west door of the Collegiata, there is a wooden group — Gabriel in red (red, I think) on one side, Virgin in blue on the other — of more value to private devotion, that of the bedside and the dark, than all the Parthenon, Sistine Chapel, six-feet *putti* in Saint Peter's, Golden Altar of Saint Mark's put together. Della Quercia did not disdain wood. The fairest of his Junoesque Madonnas is cut from the heart of a tree, and stands in a golden robe above the altar of San Martino at Siena. From wood Donatello hewed his haggard Magdalene; and one knows what the Spaniards made of it and how close they could draw us to the Agony of Christ. Above them all, to my thinking, is the Volterran group, quite alone in Tuscan art. Nor is anything so terrible, so colossal, and so dim known to me in sculpture. Lastly, it is worth while to reflect whether, in the flat art, anything can approach in poignancy the mosaic of Ravenna and Torcello — and to remember that of the stuff of that art they also make beer-bottles.

CHAPTER V

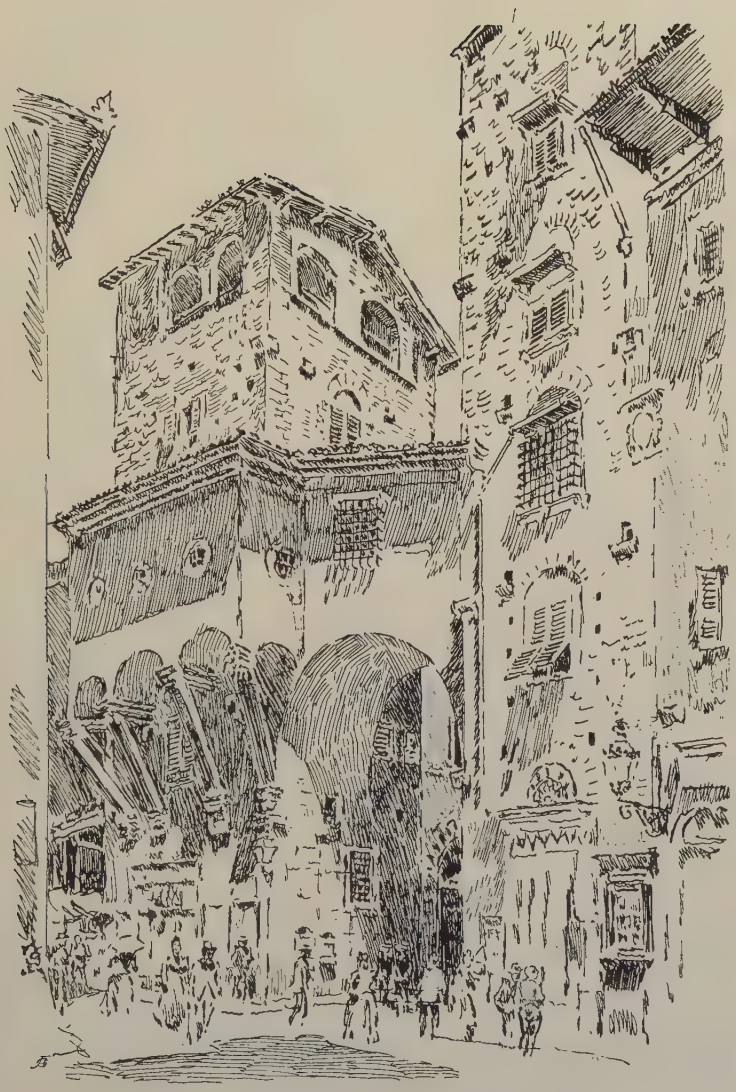
GREVE AND PESA: SAN CASCIANO, POGGIBONSI, COLLE

The great old highway from the north to Rome went through Arezzo; but Florence possessed three of her own. One was from Empóli by the Val d' Elsa, which now we know; another, nearer home, turned south at Montelupo; the third (and best for Florentine purposes) ran out by the Porta Romana, followed the Greve to San Casciano, then took to the Pesa, and joined the Val d' Elsa road at Poggibonsi. Thence to Siena is but some fourteen miles.

Upon this great outlet of Florence, and of the monstrous cube of masonry it contains, I shall only make two observations. The first is, that the Via Romana by itself is enough to prove that Florence was never built for wheeled traffic; the second concerns the Pitti Palace. If it was ever required

Via Romana: the Palace of the Wig.

to be proved that you can design an enormous building so badly that it will look half its size, here is the proof to hand. One has but to compare it with the Strozzi, which is about half, and looks twice, as big, to be convinced. Luca Pitti, most fatuous, most futile of the Florentines! He promised himself that he would build a house which would hold Filippo Strozzi's in its *cortile*. Firstly, he did not build it; and next, when it was done, although the vaunt was true, nobody would ever believe it. What his own masons would have made of it cannot now be known, for Brunelleschi and Michelozzo were no mean builders; but they never touched it after his downfall, and for near a hundred years it stood a shell. Then Eleonora of Toledo, Cosimo Primo's beautiful wife, admired it; her lord bought it for nine thousand gold florins — surely a very low price, but it is the Osservatore's figure — got Ammanati to add the wings; and lived in it, he and nine grand dukes after him. "Whoever," says the watchful Osservatore, "takes upon himself to pronounce that this edifice is a mountain of masonry, is not considering at all, as he should, the noble design, the strength, and the beauty of the parts, among which is a series of heads of lions upon the parapet of each ground-floor window, in age and



VIA ROMANA, FLORENCE.

character so varied that they form a natural history of this wild beast, so much revered by the Florentines." This is very well; but the Osservatore himself may here be observed in the trammels of the Florentine sin. In matters of art curious ornament was always a snare to these people. To the last they could never perceive that the façade of a church was not to be only a white wall on which to stick hippogriffs. There is no doubt that the deftness of the execution of the Seven Ages of Lions upon this lumpy front completely redeemed it in the Osservatore's eyes.

I like to remember that in this monumental cage lived Giovanni Gastone's Wig, the last of the Medici. In an old engraving which I possess you may see it start for an airing in a coach and six: the carabiniers present arms, the courtiers bow until their noses appear between their legs, guns fire, the beggars limp forward with petitions. With a fine young man on either hand, one to hold a powder-box, the other a comb, the Wig goes in state to high mass in San Lorenzo, above the tombs of its ancestors. This is a great picture; and so is this, where Chiabrera, a rococo poet, hymns the glories of the Pitti. His form is odic and interrogatory.

The Certosa, Florence.

Pitti, albergo di Regi,
Per le stagion festose,
Quai nelle notte ombrose,
Furo i maggior tui pregi ?
Quando udisti d' Orfeo note dogliose
Ver la Città di Dite,
O quando il piè d' argento
In te degnò mostrar l' alma Anfitrite ?
O quando al bel concento
Di tumburi guerrieri
Fur tanti Duci altieri
D' infinito ornamento ?

The scholiast defeats his purpose, glossing here.

North, east, and west, the tramways have done for the roads out of Florence what the railways have done for the country side. Halfway to Pistoja a tram runs, another to Signa, another to Rovezzano. The south parts are no exception; there is a tramway to San Casciano which, by driving the whole of the traffic into half of the road, has taught us terrible things. I have found it a dangerous quag in the wet, and in the dry one long bolster of dust. The best stretches of it — and it is a beautiful road — are ruined by this misery. Up the hill, however, and beyond the suburb which, as usual, signalises the gate and the *dazio*, on a plateau of rock, stands the brown Certosa, and looks like a fortress — and has been one in its day. A fine wood of cypress slopes

The Certosa and other sites.

away to the west of it; above the high wall you see a tower, the steep gables of the church; you can make out the cloister, and on the north side the messuages of the monks. Personally, I care little for the inside of this or any monastery in Tuscany, excepting always St. Mark's of Florence.[1] I find this Certosa tawdry, insincere, ceremonious, and *rococo*, containing, nevertheless, one good thing — the tomb of Lorenzo Acciaiuoli. The town just before it is Galluzzo, one mean street; and then, below Tavernuzze, which looks very fine, high up in a cleft of the rocks — white and grey, it is, with one thin tower — your road bears to the right, and piercing the ridge[2] by another cleft, enters a finely-wooded rising country, with the Greve, which failed to drown Buondelmonte's grandsire, running between ferny banks. The road is indeed vile, but the setting altogether lovely: an ample curve round an amphitheatre of rocks. These rise boldly in tiers, and are clothed to the very top with pines, so delicate that they look

[1] The *Seicento* stifled the community life in all sorts of ways. It bred much unwholesome and prurient thought, and it smothered the buildings in stucco and plaster. Notable examples abound. To take but two, consider Monte Oliveto by Buonconvento, and the famous La Verna above Bibbiena. This Certosa is just such another. In the case of San Marco, mercifully, they stopped in time.

[2] This ridge is actually the Chianti, the more easterly of the two. You have to cross the western ridge also to get to Poggibonsi.

like tufted velvet. Nothing more dainty gay could be imagined than this glen as I saw it last. The blue-green river ran musical among the

THE CERTOSA, FLORENCE.

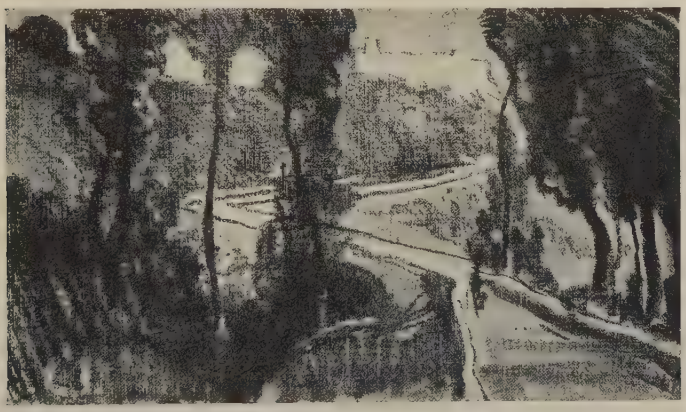
stones, eglantine and woodbine dipped as it passed; the broom was in flower, the acacias and the may. Nightingales sang at large, the frogs and cicale made a jingling accompaniment; the sun was in the heavens, a soft gale stirred the

pines. It was good to be there — but ah, better to be in England. Mr. Browning was not the only man to know that, but he was the first to say it; and perhaps I am not the second. And beautiful as this Val di Greve undoubtedly is, it is not of the Tuscan but of the general picturesque. Characteristic Tuscany is in the next valley.

San Casciano, Pesa, Val di Chianti.

Emerging from San Casciano, a town which only looks well from a distance, and calls for no remark; you get to the open country, with the western Chianti ridge straight before you. A country is this aboundingly fertile; olives, with flax, corn and maize in between them, mulberry trees to carry the vines. Not an inch of ground is wasted — a sight which would have gladdened the eyes of Mr. Arthur Young, and would have gladdened them more if he had not speculated what, with proper appliances, the yield might have been. I found a plough by the wayside just here and stayed to examine it. The whole was of wood, including the share. It had no wheels, but had to be haled by main force of two oxen through the marl. I suppose it drove a furrow of six inches. It is almost exactly that which Virgil describes in the Georgics — if that make matters any better. But as to the produce, for my

own part, I shall not care greatly what amount they win from their splendid earth until I can be sure that the yield goes into the right mouths. At present I fear it does not. The proprietor is content, the *fattore* content (or he ought to be); the *contadino* peddles along, and at all events fills his belly from



VAL DI PESA.

the ground he tills. He looks to do, and does, no more. But the labourer? Practically, he starves; a fine, limber, gentle-mannered animal, beautiful when he is young, but too soon old, he is always hungry, never knows the taste of meat. And yet he is a poet: *Musam meditatur avena!* — to twist the tag, Edinburgh fashion.

Let us now cross Pesa by a fine bridge of

brick and accost the western Chianti. Once you are across it, you are in the Val d' Elsa; but you must rise and dip, and rise again before you see Poggibonsi and San Gimignano's towers. You go up by a cypress wood, whose tops are like spears in an ambush, and round about a rocky spur, which in these parts they call Poggio Petroio, and so gradually top the first blade of the two-edged down. It is some of the best land in Tuscany, a tilth of corn and wine and oil indeed, and I could not traverse it without a sense that I was on holy ground. For between Strada, just beyond Pesa Bridge, and Tavarnelle on the crest lay Semifonte, the buried city.[1] The smiling fields — all in their spring finery of red-brown diapered with green — the olives, which look lavender in the sun, know nothing of it. Look from ridge to ridge, look east, look west; San Casciano far behind you is the only town to be seen. Here stood Semifonte! Well, perhaps the olives grow the better for its bones.

Elsa, and all her little towns.

Tavarnelle, wide-streeted and comfortable, is on the very top of this Chianti ridge; a mile or more beyond it, you round a corner and come in full view of the broad Val d' Elsa, than which I know no prospect

[1] See Chapter ii., where I have spoken at large about this place.

more attractive in a quiet way of its own. It is pastoral country, yet with a spice of classic for-

THE CERTOSA, FLORENCE.

mality in the way the towns are dotted in, each exactly fitting its own pedestal. It is, we may say, a Claude Lorrainish, Nicholas Poussinesque sort of country: nymphs, goats, ruins, towns on

hill-tops, bunchy trees, and a velvety texture over all. It has character; it has some mystery, for all those far-off towns look more grandiose than in fact they are. It is quietly but admirably composed; it chastens the fancy; it leads the mind from the politicians to the people, from the artists to the artisans. To put the matter in a nutshell, it is exactly like Gray's *Elegy* — a restrained, academic landscape. Immediately before you, as you stand, is Barberino, heaped up like a cairn upon the top of a mound — a warm foxy-brown and cream-coloured village, with an open-work belfry to its church and a look-out tower as warden of the east. Here, as I have always chosen to suppose, lived La Nencia, that nymph of the orchards whose loves Lorenzo sang most excellently well.[1] Indeed, I thought that I had seen her as I passed, in an olive garden, with a yellow shawl over her head. Over and beyond Barberino, over the western slope, you can just see the roofs of Certaldo; beyond that again, looking S.-W., sheer across the vale, deep in

[1] It is certain, I am bound to confess, that she lived in Barberino di Mugello, a village in the upper Val di Sieve, near Scarperia. There is internal evidence. Not only is the poem an admirable burlesque of the Rispetti daily made in those parts, but the hero of it, "povero Vallera sventurato" fetches his images from local sources. For instance—

Se mi dicessi, quando Sieve è grossa,
— Gettati dentro: i' mi vi getteria.

This is conclusive.

Towards the Porta Romana, Florence

purple shadows, is San Gimignano, sad little city, with its thirteen towers clumped together into seven. Further round towards the south

THE PORTA ROMANA, FLORENCE.

is Poggibonsi, a warm heap of buildings, with a tower or two. The prospect should please you.

Poggibonsi is a merry town, where I heard

more laughter in half an hour than in Florence in a week. It has two fine churches, externally, and a castello, so ornate and trim that I suspect it of *rifacimento*, and the town of having wasted its pence. The great church has a Tuscan belfry of the true sort — a turretted tower; the invariable palladian façade is stuck against the body of the nave, with the invariable result that it is misleading seen from before and ridiculous from any other point of view. The interior is neo-classical, in the manner of Santo Spirito at Florence — a plain cross in shape, with Doric columns and entablature, painted grey and white. The result is ugly but decent. There are some Pollajuolesque frescoes on the walls, mild, dextrous, and anæmic. San Domenico, the other church, has nothing whatever within, and without is sadly encumbered by buildings. It has an odd, but successful belfry — a square trunk carrying pinnacles and balls at each corner; out of that a turret with a cone, and atop of all a brass vane. *Corpus Christi* was at hand; there was great preparation for the feast when I was there: the merriest, haphazardest business of tintacks, tinsel, and turkey-red tassels that ever I saw. I like better the Piedmont custom, which you may see in the Alpine villages between Turin and the

Poggibonsi.

Mont Cenis. There they stick the streets with green boughs, and carpet the pavement with flowers, to commemorate the sacrament; thus earth is made green and red in honour of earth made Flesh and Blood.

At the *Aquila*, a pleasant country inn, I broke my fast. *Commercianti* kept me company, and

POGGIBONSI.

roasted the padrona over a dry fire of wit. But she knew her men. This was part of the meal — the relish, without which they could not eat bread. She ran off her list of dishes, with an apparent hopefulness of tone which her looks belied. *Bistecche?* and she waited. "Leave them to repair the permanent way." *Cotolette di vitello?* "Dio caro, are there no soldiers in Poggibonsi?" There was, in fact, a regiment

bivouacked in the Piazza San Domenico. The jokes may have been old, though they were fired off with gusto; for each she had a deprecating grin. *Manzo bollito*, then? She was sure these signori would be pleased. I waited for the outcry; but, by Heaven, they ate it! The whole was a great comedy; and so was it, that one of my friends called for a clove of garlic, and industriously wiped his plate and knife with it before he would suffer his meat to touch either.

Colle.

My long day ended at Colle, in a rough inn of the lower town. I have been here many times, and in all sorts of weather, — for the place lies at a crossing of four high roads, — but have never failed to be struck by the noble appearance of the upper town — a street of tall palaces, of great gates, and one proud old tower, lining with a double row the spine of rock. Many and many a city has fallen gently to decay; and some ignobly, like Ravenna, and some beautifully, like Ferrara. But Colle has met death with heroism, and so splendid was the craftsmanship which stood her up, that nothing has fallen yet. Only the perishable stuff, the wood, plaster, and mortar, has dropped out: the stone blocks remain immovable; the huge cornices, mortised into place, may still be used against the weather.

Sienese by choice, Florentine by fate, below this street of hers of great houses was fought that

THE CASTLE OF POGGIBONSI.

fight between the rival cities where Provenzano Salvani met his shameful death. It turned on a

comma. There had been a prediction — Villani says it was a wile of the Devil's — whispered in Provenzano's ear: — "Anderai e combatterai, vincerai, no morrai alla battaglia, e la tua testa fia la più alta del campo." To this he trusted. *Thou shalt go up and fight, thou shalt prevail, not in battle shalt thou die, and may thy head be highest in the field.* Battle was joined in the valley below; but De Montfort with the Florentines outnumbered the Ghibellines, outflanked them, and drove them back into their trenches. There they stayed, while the others prepared the assault. And then Cavolino Tolomei, a Sienese exile, enemy of the house of Provenzano, disguised himself and went about the trenches, seeking the captain; whom, when he had found, he followed in and out, and leaping upon him in a lonely place, stabbed him through and through, and cut off his head, and fixed it high on a lance and bore it off in full sight of the Sienese. And thus was fulfilled that lying prophecy, which had been spoken with this intention, — "Anderai e combatterai, vincerai *no*, morrai alla battaglia, e la tua testa fia la più alta del campo"; *Thou shalt go up and fight, thou shalt prevail not, in battle shalt thou die, and may thy head be highest in the field.* He did not prevail, in battle he died, and his head was high above all others. Then it was that the

Sienese fled and were massacred as they flew; and then also Sapia, that virago of party, who

PORTA ROMANA FROM OUTSIDE.

had watched from her tower the havoc of her own countrymen with beastly delight, turned her burning face to God and cried out at Him —

"Henceforth I fear Thee no more!" Dante gives her a flick as he passes her.

> Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapia
> Fossi chiamata,

the lady confesses herself. Pier Pettignano saved her by prayer.[1]

[1] He sold combs on the bridge at Pisa, and was a famous *fakir* of Siena.

POGGIO IMPERIALE, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER VI

VOLTERRA TO THE SOUTH: MASSA MARITTIMA

I MUST fetch backwards from this point, and pick up my line at Volterra, whence I pushed on farther into the south part of Tuscany, nor rested until I had touched its uttermost limit at Orbetello.

I consider Semifonte to have been the fairest city in Tuscany, because I have never seen it. Next to that I had been accustomed to place Pomarance, partly because it also I had never seen, partly because of its fragrant name. If it be a habit peculiar to poets to mistake names for things,[1] then I am a poet; for it was impossible for me to suppose that a place called Pomarance could be other than exquisite. Hereby I was betrayed into a fatuity which I shall not attempt to conceal. Instead of going on from Colle to Siena, and from Siena to the south, securing by these means not only

Pomarance.

[1] But is by no means so. The vice is common to politicians, tacticians, and the religious.

a good road but also a sight of San Galgano, what must I needs do but chase this Fata Morgana of a Pomarance? Folly of a fool! The little place, which from a distance seems coloured like a Killarney rose, is a very good sort of town, but only in one sense out of the way. That, it undoubtedly is. For, first of all, you have those dread leagues over chasmy mud to pass — Spicchiaiola, the Monte della Torre, Bevis of Hampton's blood-coloured cliff; then the abhorred climb beneath the walls of Volterra. I saw the place, as vast and inert in the sun as it had been of old in drizzling fog. Again I saw severe maids in felt hats, sickles in girdle; again I felt my hairs on end. Within sight of the fatal gate — at the Garibaldi monument — you turn and go down a sloping road into the valley. And far ahead of you rose-coloured Pomarance, in Emerson's pretty phrase, "sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible home."

To be perfectly plain, as dull a little town as you may wish to avoid is the Pomarance of practice, but it is set upon a fine brae, and commands a view of others as fine or finer. In particular, the view of Volterra impresses itself upon the memory. Many a city (notably Montepulciano) makes a grander flight into the

clouds, but none shows more strength, none seems more charged with fate. The country side, over which your eye must needs roam, adds to the impressiveness — so vacant, so weather-cursed it is. There is also to be seen, at eight miles' distance, Rocca Sillana, that massive castle alone upon a hill, from whose keep you may survey the

COLLE.

whole length and breadth of Tuscany: I speak as a fool, for I have not tested it. Sir Henry Layard certifies as to the length, for he says that your range extends from the Apennines into Umbria. Local report adds a sight of both seas.

After this there is climbing to be done:

> Vassi in Sanleò, e discendesi in Noli;
> Montasi su Bismantova in cacume
> Con esso i piè; ma qui convien ch' uom voli . . .

It is much an affair of that sort. You climb a great circular hill-road by cliffs of shining mica; you look across a gorge to a pyramidal rock (the denuded core, doubtless, of a volcano), wooded from base to point, and see atop of it the invariable frontier castle, a warden of the western sea for the prince-bishops of Volterra. Upon the top of the next hill you will have a full view of Lardarello and the boracic acid works — if such you desire — and, more picturesque, of Monte Cerbole, a little round and walled village capping justly its mountain. Its mountain is isolated, set in the middle of a glen; behind it a broad down rises equably to the sky-line. There is nothing in this eyrie of savages to distinguish it from any other. You may count such places by scores and fifties; withal, they never fail to stir the pulse. An odd thing about them is this, that whereas they are on a much lower level than the Apennine villages, they carry altogether more weight. Fivizzano, for instance, in the Garfagnana, is walled and towered, and fulfils the top of a rock, just as this Monte Cerbole. Yet Monte Cerbole, Roccastrada, Radicofani, and others like them are horrific; Fivizzano, San Marcello, "picturesquely situate," to quote a favourite phrase of Herr Baedeker's. One reason, I take it, may be that

The way to Massa.

these Volterran hills are all volcanic; they are more abrupt; the towns upon them gain value, and seem (as they actually are) more inaccessible than those of the mountainous north. The Apennines make architecture a ridiculous pretence; but among these downs, to continue the sheer of a cliff some fifty or a hundred feet is to achieve something.[1] One more of these savage nests, and I have done with them for the present. Castelnuovo in Val di Cecina is the last of them upon the stage to Massa Marittima; the last of them, and as good as any — a stern, ruddy village, rising in steps up the rock of its foundation, charged to overflowing with tangle-haired women and children, fierce and wild. They herd and clamber about you with yells; or they watch you, bold-eyed, from their doors. Life here is that of one great family. All must have common blood, for there can be none which has not been mingled in the isolation of hundreds of years. Not a door, as I passed, but was wide open; not a window had a pane of glass in it. A huddle of stone byres, I assure you — a life lived here without privacy or the desire of it. Marriage-bed, child-bed, sick-bed, death-bed, and upon each

[1] In the same way Salisbury Plain makes Stonehenge a foolishness. But imagine those ranked boulders in Hyde Park. They would look monstrously. Salisbury Plain is on far too great a scale.

in turn the eyes of whoso pleased to turn them that way. Why not? For all that, some ten paces removed from the last hovel in the street, under a knotty old thorn-tree, I saw a youth courting a maid retired from the rest. She looked down at her fingers restless in her lap; he bent his head to whisper in her ear. One does whisper then in the Tuscan hills! I had imagined one stormed, not wooed, a girl.

Massa Marittima.

Aweary of volcanoes and abrupt, dreary villages, the reader will be as glad as I am to consider a town of pretence. Massa Marittima, when you reach it, — and the ways are long to do that, — will approve itself worthy your sore feet, though the wise Dennis did not think so.[1] It is old, it has a magnificent church, it is on the edge of a plain and a shore peopled thick with memories. Hereby were Populonia, Vetulonia, Ansedonia, Talamon. But hear old Fazio:

> . . . vedi piana
> Con altri colli la Maremma tutta,
> Dilettevole molto e poco sana.
> Ivi è Massa, Grosseto, e la distrutta

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[1] Massa Marittima was one of the few cities of the Maremma which betrayed him out of his urbanity. "A mean, dirty place," says he, "without an inn." He speaks of its "dreary dulness," and prefers the mosquitoes of Follonica. I don't agree with him at all.

Civitàvecchia, ed ivi Populonia
Ch' appena pare, tanto è mal condutta,
Là è ancora dove fu Ansedonia,
Là è la cava dove andar a torme
Si crede i tristi, ovvero le demonia.

Well might the honest man believe that troops of devils rode shrieking through the night. The view of the Maremma which you get from the citadel of Massa shows you a flat plain of unspeakable desolation. In Fazio's day — as in Dennis's — it was thick in a jungle of scrub and brushwood. Dante tells you:

Non han si aspri sterpi nè si folti,
Quelle fiere selvagge che in odio hanno,
Tra Cecina e Corneto i luoghi colti.[1]

To my own mind it looks infinitely more hag-ridden now than any wooded prospect could ever look. However, I must not anticipate what I was destined to see of it in a few days' time. Let me return to Massa Marittima.

The city occupies the western slopes and the

[1] Dennis says that it was thick with wood when he first saw it in 1847. "The boar, the roebuck, the buffalo, and wild cattle" lurked in it in those days. Everything was then in a state of primitive nature; a dense wood ran wild over the plain . . . a tall underwood of tamarisk, lentiscus, myrtle, dwarf cork-trees . . . fostered by the heat and moisture into an extravagant luxuriance, and matted together by parasitical plants of various kinds."

There is nothing of this now, of course. The brakes are all cut down, some of the land is under the plough; but the soil is so poor that very little rewards the husbandman.

top of a long and very steep hill, and consists of one serpentine street which turns upon itself three times before it reaches the citadel. Thus it happens that the back door of the inn is in the first stretch of the spiral, and that to reach the front door you must either ascend some sixty steps or walk a quarter of a mile. Here and there precipices are to be discovered between the houses, and stepped ways up them, which give short cuts to the stout of heart. But, naturally, such traffic as there is — and there is next to none — must work its way round and round about. In the long course of this one street you will discover some fine buildings: a Palazzo del Podestà, a Palazzo Comunale, a really noble church, one of the very best in the south of Tuscany, a Gothic washing-place, and atop of all the Citadel. Ruined palaces there are in abundance, of the true, inscrutable southern kind; Sienese in type, effect, and material — grey stone, namely, plain and heavy, flat-fronted, with a *pian' nobile* of Venetian windows.

A great Massetan birth.

In one of these was born the raciest saint in the calendar, and by all accounts the most free-spoken — San Bernardino of Siena, no less a man. I don't think, however, that the Massetani can claim more of him than to have cradled him, and to have given him

a mother. His father, Tollo di Dino di Baldo Albizeschi, was a Sienese gentleman of family; Nera di Bernardino di Ranieri Avveduti of Massa was his mother. Orphaned at five years old, he was taken to Siena to live with his aunt

MASSA MARITTIMA.

of the mother's side, Donna Diana, and only returned to Massa to sell his belongings. One more connection with his birthplace he had. It was a Massetano — Padre Galgano — who in 1402 admitted him into the Franciscan order. He said his first mass in 1404. A man of extraordinary burning zeal he was, as all the world knows, of native pungency, and of sound political

sagacity. He did, indeed, far more than Savonarola, who had no sagacity at all, and really more than Saint Catherine, his countrywoman, who had a great deal. For if she moved the Pope, he moved Christendom, and has moved it ever since. The tale of his invention of the divine monogram may be fable[1] — though I see no reason to suppose it so: that he used it in his mission is entirely true. Its success was as remarkable as his own; since the invention, or introduction, of the rosary there has never been so moving a device. You may say, "A formula the more." I am not at all concerned to deny it. The world was ruled by formulas before J.-J. Rousseau and his friends set about to destroy them; and just as much as he did but substitute new formulas for old ones, so the world is still ruled by them since Jean-Jacques died and was buried. Is not the Cross itself a formula? Nay, have we not been driven to contrive higher formulas yet? And, to put it at its lowest, that is a wise man and a statesman who can found a formula and carry it through.

[1] It is very well known. San Bernardino made so many converts by his preaching that he ruined those sort of men and women who live on the vicious. One of these — a maker of dice he was — came to see him, with his grievance that what was fish to the preacher's net was starvation to his. Bernardino thereupon traced out the I. H. S. upon a stone, and bade him make tablets with that upon them instead of his deuce, ace, and tray. And so he did.

For by such the world has always been wagged, and there seems to be no other way.

If the palaces of Massa recall Siena, the cathedral church of San Cerbone[1] is nearer the great model of Lucca. There is none to approach its grandeur in Siena. It is in shape a severely long and plain basilica, with a triply-arcaded façade, an arcaded side, with a clerestory in black and white bars. It has a lead cupola — which is like Siena — upon an octagon of brick, a square stone belfry with a conical cap of pink brick; and out of this belfry pushes and flourishes a fig-tree. The façade is fantastic but perfectly successful. I have said that there are three arcades of round arches; and it is true. But the uppermost arcade is deeper than the others, and behind it you may discover a true Gothic window with flamboyant tracery. Italy at large has the secret of this composite building which breaks all the rules and looks beautiful. The colour here is as variegated as a spring parterre — warm pink, French grey, pale lemon-yellow, black, lichen-gilt stone. Severity, age, permanence: think of their value in a yeasty little state such as this where parties change as

Massa church, without

[1] Dennis, perversely out of touch with this place, calls it "a neat edifice," which it precisely is not. Not Lassels, who applied it to Siena church, made worse choice of an adjective.

the wind veers, and to-day you embrace Siena, and to-morrow you spring at her throat. Christianity, the Church, the Faith — these three, who then were one, never changed, though Popes raised armies and burned and pillaged like condottieri. All Italy, I say, had the secret of this; but only Tuscany had the great way of doing it. You cannot accuse Ligurian architecture of style; nor Venetian architecture when it takes such forms, for instance, as the Santo of Padua. But Pisa, Lucca, this Massa Marittima — they compel your admiration, partly by effrontery, but mainly by character. And character in a man is style in art.

Inside, this church is still splendid in its old age. Pale old Sienese frescoes — dreamy Madonnas, languishing saints and angels, knights on horseback, hawks and greyhounds — are still on the walls. Even Dennis admired the baptismal font. He says it is made of one block of stone, and very likely it is. At any rate it is large enough to swim or drown in, has a beautiful scroll-work screen of iron round about it, and ancient carvings upon its four sides — semi-Byzantine things, where the waves of Jordan fall like a cope over the Saviour's shoulders; and for its feet lions mangling prostrate lambs. A date, 1267, is upon it. The church itself was

and within.

built in Bishop Albert's time in 1225. At the west end there are also carvings in black basalt: grotesque, dwarfed images of holy persons, earlier in date by the look of them, and not unlike those figures of Roland and Oliver which one remembers at Verona.

THE PIAZZA, MASSA MARITTIMA.

The church and palaces of Government are at the second turn of the spiral, upon an outpushing spur of the hill, called l' Oriolo. Below them is the public fountain — a deep and broad tank under Gothic arches, like Fontebranda at Siena. To reach the citadel, which was the castle of the bishops when they

The citadel — Monte Regio.

lorded it here,[1] you must climb the last third of the spiral, to the top of the hill which is called Monte Regio. If you do this you will find what I believe, and Dennis unwillingly admits, to have been the original Etruscan town: Vetulonia or another, all's one now. There is here, to all intents and purposes, a separate town behind walls. A great square tower rises in the midst — the bishop's rock of offence. The walls are built in courses of stone and tufa; but Dennis says — and no doubt he is right — the blocks are not big enough to be Etruscan. There is therefore nothing but tradition to go upon in this matter of Etruscan Massa; but I shall refer you to Dennis, if you don't know him already — a mature old Scots gentleman, an enthusiast and a great scholar, you will find him. His book is one of the few good ones written about Tuscany.

A great and broad view of the Maremma, misty purple when I saw it, brooding but not unkindly, shows the traveller whither he must tend on the morrow if he wishes to find Grosseto.

[1] See the Appendix to this chapter for an outline of Massa's history.

APPENDIX

HISTORIES OF MASSA MARITTIMA

THERE are two histories of this little nation — a political, which is worthless, and a domestic, which is tragic, and might be of the highest instruction. But its only historian — an industrious Dottore Luigi Petrocchi — has heard the drums and trumpets too kindly to have much of an ear left for the groanings of the poor.

Massa was always the seat, and by degrees became the principality of a bishop; and so remained until the first quarter of the thirteenth century, when Bishop Albert, falling heavily into debt, pawned to the Massetani their own liberties and immunities. There was a relapse for a few years, but the city acted as a full-fledged republic in 1225. Its first outside struggles were with the highland chiefs round about it — notably with the Pannocchieschi, and Aldobrandeschi of Santa Fiora, very notable and puissant ruffians — as to whom Mr. William Heywood has much of interest to report in his *Ensamples of Fra Filippo* (pp. 205 *sqq.*). This was the way of all Tuscan communes. The Massetani prevailed against some of them. In 1232 Ranuccio di Guglielmo and Ildebrandino di Malpollione with their following became citizens *en bloc*. Thus, having sowed peace outside the walls, they had to reap discord within, and were driven into the camp of this or that stronger nation according as the winds blew at home. They leagued with Pisa against Florence, with Florence against Pisa and Castruccio; they sided with Volterra against San Gimignano; they joined the Ghibelline League, the Guelf League; but on the whole they remained loyal to Siena and the Emperor, and, borrowing money from that state, were taken into what was virtually a servitude. In the fall of Siena Massa was involved, and so severe had been the yoke upon them that the Massetani were the

first subject-state of the Sienese dominion to submit to Cosimo of Florence. With the weight of his heavy, but fatherly hand upon them, their political history stops short at this point.

But neither Cosimo, who was a just man, nor Francis, who was not unkindly, could help Massa against her real and constant enemy. Long before the Medici rule, long before the Sienese, had reached its harvest, the Maremma had begun to levy tribute. The marshes encroached upon the hill, the jungle rotted year by year. Minotaur that it was, it demanded a yearly tribute of youth, and got it. Repetti shows that in 1428 the population of the city had fallen to 400 lost souls. What it must have been in 1560 one cannot imagine; according to Dr. Petrocchi, in 1737, when Gian Gastone's wig was taken off, there were only 26 poderi in cultivation in all the contado, and no more than 527 persons alive within the walls. The saw ran in that time —

Va' a Massa; guardala e passa.

The Lorrainers finally saved the place, after one false start. Francis III., thinking population was the needful thing, colonised Massa with 146 families from the Rhine country, 600 souls in all. Land, corn, a yoke of oxen, were given to each household, which was bidden then to thrive and replenish the earth. There seemed to those poor Rhinelanders only one way to do that, which was to die: that they did with extraordinary rapidity. One by one their houses were left empty. They perished utterly: left no descendants, says Repetti. The two Leopolds really brought salvation in by draining the swamps and letting in the hill-torrents. The Ghirlanda bog, the Ronna, the Pozzajone, the Venella were all ditched and emptied; but Leopold II. had to get the horrible lagoon of Piombino pumped before he could cut his drains. And here is Repetti's table of population to speak for the house of Lorraine:

In 1640 there were	165	families of	586	souls
„ 1745	„ 145	„	442	„
„ 1833	„ 457	„	2482	„
„ 1839	„ 446	„	2840	„

It is these peaceful feats of the Lorrainers that make men still regret the days of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

A SHRINE, PONTE VECCHIO.

CHAPTER VII

GROSSETO AND THE COAST ROAD: ORBETELLO

I HAVE reason to believe that, had I gone from Massa to Follonica, from Follonica to Grosseto, I should have been better justified in heading this chapter as I have. I should have got more sea and more of a coast road; but I should also have got more sand, which seems incredible. For the benefit of the adventurous, however, I say that there is such a road, three times as long as the other, not always carriageable, but giving you Follonica to inspect, and the *pineta* to traverse — both of which I missed. What did I gain? Possibly something in the matter of roads, though it was mighty little, for a three-quarter wind was raging which blew the grit in my face and smothered up the marshes in grey smoke. What else? Nothing, upon my honour, but a few hours more in Grosseto, and a nearer view of the Maremma Grossetana. This did not strike me, though it was forlorn

Choice of roads.

enough, as being so arid as the Pisan marshes; and certainly it held none of the sinister menace

NEAR ORBETELLO.

of the Volterran wilderness. It is cut up, as the Lincolnshire Fens are, into large fields with

grass dykes and ditches between them. A certain amount of land is under the plough; cattle and sheep feed some off; a good deal of grass had been put up for hay, which was being carried when I was there — on the 24th of May. No doubt it is infected land: there are no villages anywhere in sight, and such tenements as there are — railway stations and the like — have wire gauze over the windows. The mosquito's bite, they say now, is death. It may have been a mosquito that killed young Pia de' Tolomei, whose life and death the critics are denying with one accord. They rave.[1] There is a range of low hills — the Monti d' Alma — which you must cross, driving my way to Grosseto. La Pia's prison stood just at the foot of these, facing north. The Castello di Pietra it is called; but it lay far from my road, with none of its own, so I never saw it. Here in these swamps, amid standing pools and tangled brakes, sterile breadths of reed, out of sight or call of man, she than whom Siena had made nothing more fair, grew hollow-cheeked and filmy-eyed, and very ready for Death when he had pity upon her.

[1] This is one of those fruitless, empty exercises so much in vogue at the present. Francesca's age, La Pia's marriages, Beatrice's substance: how in the name of Wonder can such things matter? Dante, the author (as far as we are concerned) of their being, has provided for all these things. I adhere to Keats' dictum in these matters.

Beautiful, poignant, slim figure of a young girl, carved immortal in one line:

Siena mi fè, disfecemi Maremma.

It is after passing these hills that the Grossetan Maremma, strictly speaking, begins. It is not near so wide as ours in Lincolnshire, for you are never out of sight of the hills; but it is excessively miserable. I think we scarcely passed more than one substantial house: the rest were hovels. One such I do remember — Monte Pescali by name, a villa of pretence, standing, cypress-girt, upon a little hill, with a carriage-drive, flower-beds, and many statues gleaming in groves of ilex and myrtle. A *palazzo* it was called by a little boy of whom I inquired its name. After this, enormous plains opened on either hand, some broken up, some left fallow, in which the great dun cattle stood motionless, each apart from other, staring into space. Whether they were wild or tame I know not: they were a forbidding spectacle. At last, half-hidden in a clump of trees, I descried Grosseto, and was thankful.

Grosseto.

It has prosperity, it has many industries, a brisk air of business, a first-rate inn — the Stella d' Italia, one of the best in Tuscany[1] — but it has

[1] Here Dennis agrees with my ruling. He lays it down as the best inn between Pisa and Rome. I would go further, and say that I only

lost the picturesque. It has rebuilt its Palazzo Comunale in the most modern antique. I hardly remember a villa on the Riviera as its parallel. Harsh red brick, pointed to death with white plaster; thin, exaggerated battlements which could not withstand a boy's catapult; painted mouldings — but enough. The Cathedral is no

THE FERRY ROAD TO ORBETELLO.

better. An extremely ancient site, a finely severe shape, once of striped marble (of which some few bars remain), it has been coated in and out with plaster, and painted in stripes of red and yellow. These mimic the hue but not the tone, nor of course the quality, of the marbles which lie under-

know one to approach it between Genoa and Rome — the Croce di Malta at Spezzia. But inns have their traditions. From what Dennis says, the excellence of the Stella d' Italia goes with the good-will of the house.

neath all this rubbish, awaiting the general resurrection.[1]

Leaving Grosseto, your road is never far from the sea, and at Orbetello, as it seems, takes you bodily into it. For a small portion of your course, a range of low limestone hills lies between you and it: the Monti dell' Uccellina is the name of them, at whose southern extremity you behold Talamone standing in the water — a heap of pale ruin. Here was the place where Telamon the companion of Jason upon the Argo may or may not have set up his rest; what is certain is that the Sienese, among many crack-brained projects, had one of making it their Leghorn. Sapia, sending messages by Dante from her toilsome way up the Hill of

To Orbetello: Talamone.

[1] There is little or nothing to be said here of the history of Grosseto. The Counts of Sovana (Aldobrandeschi) had it under the Emperor, and sub-enfeoffed a kinsman, whose descendants held it until the thirteenth century. In 1224 the Sienese sacked and possessed themselves of it; save for a very few years — from the death of Frederick II. to the morrow of Montaperto, when there was a republic of Grosseto under Grossetan consuls — it depended upon Siena, and with that city fell to Cosimo. The real history, as in Massa's case, began with the tussle of the Grand Dukes and the Marshes. The first three Medici did much, the remainder let all go to ruin; so the Lorrainers had to begin again. What the two Leopolds accomplished — in the banking of the Ombrone and *poldering* of the accursed Pescaja of Castiglione, may be read at large in Repetti (*s.v.*); and fine reading it is for those who see in this kind of warfare the real heroism which it involves. Here are his figures:

In 1640 there were	238	families of	1340	souls
„ 1745	„	212	„	648	„
„ 1833	„	452	„	2321	„

Purgation to her kinsfolk upon earth, tells him where to look for them.

> Tu li vedrai, she says, tra quella gente vana
> Che spera in Talamone, e perderagli
> Più di speranza che a trovar la Diana ;
> Ma più vi metteranno gli ammiragli.

Bitter scorn, all this: — "You will find them among that windy folk who trust in Talamone, and will lose more good hope there than in digging for Diana — and their admirals will lose yet more." The Diana was that supposed underground river for which the Sienese were always groping under their hill; but even that was a more hopeful scheme than to deepen the Ombrone and cut a navigable waterway from Siena to it, and from it to Talamone. The houses that huddle there were once called a city; the broken mole once made a haven. A few poor fevered wretches linger there now; and the bay is so choked with silt and weed that, according to Dennis, there is scarcely water enough to float a coasting steamer in. You cross a couple of creeks by ferry-boats — one before Talamone, one after it. The second of them is the Albegna, and marks what was the southern extremity of Tuscany until the Congress of Vienna in 1814. A little fortress on the further bank is testimony of that. For Orbetello and that delta of land

between the Albegna and the Fiora formed the Presidij — the last garrison of the Empire in Italy. Not all the Medici strength in Cosimo I., nor any of their guile in his successors, could get that away from the Kings of Spain, or of Naples, their successors in this inheritance. However, it was Tuscan for more than half a century, though

THE FRONTIER FORT IN THE MAREMMA.

there is little enough show of it there now. From opposite Talamone until you cross the drawbridge, by which alone access is possible, you see it beyond you, lying as it seems in the sea; behind it rises the Monte Argentario, a rocky, green-clad island of two peaks. On the further promontory of the mainland lay — and there still lies ruined — Ansedonia, a great Etruscan city. Orbetello, in fact, lies upon a sandy isthmus

connecting Italy with Monte Argentario. What once was sea on either hand has been enclosed by the action of wind and tide into two lagoons.[1]

Orbetello.

Strange, amphibian little place that it is — half fortress, half fishing village. It had great strength once — so much is evident in its double line of defence, the ports and antiports. Traces of the Spanish occupancy are not awanting. Fountains, statues, obelisks, carry the castles and lions upon escutcheons, and pompous ascriptions to Carlos and Philip and Ferdinand below them. There is a certain excess of plaster-magnificence in building which is unlike Tuscany. Audacity was a mark of the Cinquecento, tawdry luxuriance of the Seicento; but to swagger and strut in plaster was never a Tuscan foible. It may be coincidence, or it may be an evidence of blood, but it is the fact that in the poor, pretentious church of this town the altars are adorned with dolls in glass cases exactly as you find them in Spain. I did not remark any pronounced Spanish type in the inhabitants: nobody was superbly idle enough, nobody stared at me as if I were at once curious and beneath contempt,

[1] There are therefore three isthmuses, so to speak. Orbetello stands upon the first formed of them. The others were no doubt made by the same agents as had made the first.

nobody was to be seen chasing a woman as if she were his natural prey; many wore rags, but none as if they were a mantle-royal. Now the Orbetellani were as busy, playful, hungry and patient, as fond of their children and little dogs,

ORBETELLO.

as decorous without care to be so, as apt to display and as deprived of the means to do it, as any of their lovable kindreds on the mainland. It may be true that their Toscanity dates but from the nineteenth century; they had been Tuscans aforetime without knowing it.

They say that the two salt-water lagoons are unwholesome, and I daresay they are. They are

blue, however, and laugh as innumerably as ever the waves of the Ægean; and they are full of large fish. In the creeks and inlets are many little flat-bottomed boats wherein to adventure them. Dennis says that the fishing is done by night, with torches and spears. They "burn the water," in fact. I did not see any such thing; but an old man, whose acquaintance I made over a pipe, told me that a good deal was net-work. Lines they had, and stake-nets. He said that the fish were poor eating, and the bigger they were the poorer they were. The little ones, however, were excellent — a kind of whitebait. He showed me portions of the old walls: *roba antichissima*, he said, *roba etrusca*. And then, pointing his hand southwards to a headland, "See," said he, "the ancient city of Ansedonia: a wonderful place, by all accounts." It was like a misty blot in the blue — little or nothing to be seen. I asked him about Orbetello: he confessed it a miserable lodging. The winds cut it all to pieces in the winter, and the sea very often broke through the sandy bar. In the summer it was full of fever. By talking about it he seemed to become suddenly aware of its ill-fortune. He looked wildly about him, then at me. "Chè brutto paese!" he said, "cursed by the water, cursed by the land!" He nodded his head:

"Brutto! brutto paese!" He lived there, he added, because he had been born there. He was a fisherman: out yonder — he pointed across the lagoon to a reed-encumbered strip — were his nets.

In the public gardens I saw palm trees and

ORBETELLO.

women with children; and I conversed with the gardener. He knew his business, I found out, though it is none of our business who garden at home; for he saw me pulling snails off his carnations and seemed to wonder what I was about. But he showed me feats of his which were beyond my powers: cannas and cactuses, to wit, growing like weeds in the open. His carnations would

have been excellent if the snails had not been more excellent; his roses, which he succeeded in growing under trees, were by no means bad; his stocks grew like saplings; his verbenas and phloxes were flowering shrubs. In lilies I think I could have beaten him; he could not grow delphiniums — I could only pity his attempt towards it; his bamboos, as he admitted, were vexed by the salt-gales. He knew not the name of hollyhock. We sized each other up, boasted of what we could and extenuated what we must. He presented me with a nosegay; we parted on very good terms, he to his watering, I to the garlicky inn and a night with the *fauna* of Orbetello. It is a poor and dull little town, in sooth. I can only promise the traveller such comfort as may accrue from lying in mid-lagoon between Ansedonia and Talamone, cities of Etruria. For the rest, he will be capered over by fleas, and will toss under the shadow of mosquitoes' wings. There is little else. Orbetello is a name of some pretence; it has few diversions and a bad inn — and there's no more to say.

CHAPTER VIII

ACROSS COUNTRY — GROSSETO TO SIENA

To the landlord of the Stella d' Italia at Grosseto I owe many things — cool and sun-guarded chambers, wine and pasta of the best, a sunk marble bath and abundance of water, the sight of his hairless dog, and the attendance of his handsome serving-maid; but for one thing I cannot praise him. As a guide to the roads of his country he is not only incompetent, but believes himself the contrary. Of the three ways from Grosseto to Siena — one good, one bad, one impossible — he stoutly recommended the last.[1] He said that he himself

A tale of my landlord.

[1] The high-road, which is (for Southern Tuscany) excellent, goes by Monte Pescali, Roccastrada and Chiusdino, the two last being fine hill-towns — Roccastrada one of the very finest. I have only seen it from a distance. Close to Chiusdino is the ruined Cistercian abbey of San Galgano — the model (never approached) of Gothic building in all the Sienese dominion. An alternative road is to follow that by which I was induced to adventure as far as Paganico, thence to Montalcino and Buonconvento. Here you join the Via Romana, and have a good level course to the gate of Siena. Montalcino is the great attraction of this road. Mine gave me little but a fired brake and an appetite.

always used it, that it was shorter than the others by some eighteen miles, that it had *poca salita* and little dust, that it was in excellent repair. In short, it was madness to go by any other. The truth is that it is the route of the crows when they wish to go to Siena; it is a dead straight; over hill over dale, thorough bush thorough briar. It is not to be mistook; for when you see a mountain before you, you know you must scale it, and when an abyss yawns, you know you must leap down. There is no dust, it is true, for most of it is at the height where super-terrestrial winds rage from one peak to another; but it is furrowed by the channels of winter torrents. It is not graded, not engineered in any way. It is, as I say, a track marked out by the droppings of crows as they wing a flight to the North from the pickings of dead cattle in the Maremma. Possibly the shepherds of the Garfagnana use it, as they feed their way to their own mountain pastures in the summer — it is nothing to them, to the crags upon which they perch, or the zigzag paths over which they go barefoot. But to Florentine horses, or automobiles of France, it is a deadly enterprise.

Your few gains may be counted on the fingers of your right hand: a derelict mountain village or two, a view of Roccastrada upon your left

hand and of Montalcino on your right—Montalcino and that great range of hills, Monte

ROCCASTRADA.

Amiata, Monte Labbro, Monte Civitella, and the rest, which divide the Ombrone from the Orcia.

This, of course, is something; and something is the woodland nature of the road. These hills — for you cross the chain upon which Roccastrada stands — are densely wooded, and their only denizens are charcoal-burners, their dogs and their cattle; and the only buildings their squat kilns. I don't forget Paganico — that is great gain, nor the view of Siena. To those only I address myself.

From Grosseto to Batignano the road presents the usual features of the Maremma Grossetana — of which I, for one, have had more than enough. It passes nearly, but does not discover, the site of the Etruscan city of Rusellæ;[1] Batignano itself, a cheerless little rock village of grey and russet, is the only haunt of men in all this region. Then, after an up and down woodland road, very English, being mostly grown with oak and hornbeam, you see in front of you Paganico — that, too, like an English walled hamlet — red brick with a red church and square tower, not unlike Old Basing in Hants, with ivied walls of defence broken in many places. It stands upon a ridge of the land, and in the valley below it the Ombrone runs between woody banks,

Paganico.

[1] The intrepid Dennis fought his way to Rusellæ through a jungle so dense that he had to cut it with bill and axe. It is on the steep wooded hill of Moscona, some two miles off the road on the right.

crisply over a pebble beach, and takes to itself a

ROCCASTRADA.

brook called Gretano. But the Ombrone is by no means like an English river; its colour is

peacock-green, its wave is semi-opaque, and its winter course too furious for our level and comfortable land.

Nor is Paganico English by any means the moment you are within the great gateway, which still stands, with its fellow at the other end of the street. It is built a square — about the size, let us say, of the Piazza Annunziata at Florence — within double walls, and has been arcaded all round in its days of prosperity. The houses are tumbling this way and that, there is hardly a window with unbroken glass. The pavements — for the whole was once paved — have been broken up, weeds alone flourish at Paganico; there are no shops, no signs of wheeled traffic, very few people, and, worst sign of all in Tuscany, very few children. One prosperous house in the whole place could I see — a whitewashed house with a wall of its own and an iron gate, through which I made out a flowery terrace and some orange-trees in tubs.

These are signs that Paganico has fallen on evil days, that it has known greater. Some one of the Pannocchieschi clan had it under Sienese suzerainty; a shield of their arms is still to be seen outside the church; but its position made it important. It was fortified by the Frati Umiliati, — a warlike body of religious, chamberlains,

ex officio, of Siena — and many times besieged, once by Castruccio himself.[1] Then, when the Medici had it, it was created a Marquessate for Don Antonio, called by that name — I mean the lad whom Bianca Capello, a barren wife, bought in the Via del Fosso. Other Marquesses — the Patrizii of Siena, a great family — it knew. But now they are as dead as Adonais, and very soon Paganico will mingle dust with them. Last of it to go, I predict, will be the church, a sturdy, squared rectangle of brick, with the English tower aforesaid. That this has been a well-adorned place in days long past and over, may be due to a miraculous crucifix which still hangs there behind a curtain, and has done wonders among the people within the last thirty years, as various tablets record. "Most ancient, most venerable is the image of the Crucified carved in wood, which is adored in the parish

[1] It was in 1328, the last year of his life, and as busy as any. He had subdued a rising in Pisa in the spring of the year; he stayed a serious attack of the Florentines upon Pistoja in September, whereof he died. But in August he had dashed out southward to assist the Pannocchieschi snatch Monte Massi in the Maremma from the Sienese; Paganico lay in his road, — which was mine the other day, — so he raised his engines of war about it and very shortly had it at his discretion. He succeeded also at Monte Massi, but being called off suddenly to Pistoja, was forced to leave it. The Sienese, helped by Florence, had it again after a brisk assault, and were highly elated at their success. That fine equestrian figure painted in the Palazzo Pubblico — Guido Riccio of Modena upon a much-housed horse — commemorates the exploit. See the Appendix to this chapter for the death of Castruccio.

church of Paganico, and can be traced there into the thirteenth century"; so says the severe Repetti with unwonted warmth. He adds that there are about its altar pictures by Taddeo di Bartolo, which I confess I didn't see there. I saw a pretty Benvenuto di Giovanni over the west door, and a whole chapelful of Lorenzettesque frescoes in the choir — *Nativity*, *Epiphany*, *Weighing of Souls*, *Last Judgment* — with no particular merit but their seriousness and mellow aspect to recommend them. Other pictures were there, *seicento*, but not impossibly so; sober, dark, and academic pieces they appeared — none of your pink mammoths and blue-flounced angels, of the sort Pocetti set shrieking at you in Florence. Lastly, on a lunette outside a north door, there do remain the vestiges of a beautiful thing, of the Simone Memmi school: a tall fair Virgin holding up an overgrown Bimbo, Saint John Baptist and an angel in attendance — the whole swaying together, sweet and graceful, coloured warm orange, crimson, and green.

While we saw the sights of Paganico, the Pagani saw us and our equipage, and marvelled greatly. The whole population of some fifty souls — I take it some were afield cutting clover — stood about the carriage. A pleasant and friendly race they were, entirely cut off from any such

world as we moved in, yet entirely contented. They were very thin, very unclothed, and as brown as nuts. The women wore the hats of Siena, those haloes of lemon-coloured straw than which no head-gear in the world is more becom-

WALLS OF SIENA.

ing to a pretty girl, nor any more disastrous to a plain one.

The road is still long and inconceivably toilsome to Siena, leading through a spacious upland country, mainly through woods, but with clearings here and there which show you the deep Val d' Orcia and the grey hills beyond. From the summit of

L' Imposta, Petriolo, Siena.

L' Imposta, indeed, you have a view on either hand; on the right Montalcino to the far north-east, a dark red fringe to the mountain, then the whole range of Monte Amiata with clouded crown; on the other hand, where the country rises and falls more gently, Civitella is to be seen, a little warm town with a single tower, and, almost on the sky-line, a clump of building on a height which I believe was Roccastrada. After L' Imposta comes a gentle fall, then a long and winding climb through ilex woods, and a terrific descent into the gorge of the Farma, which made my brake red-hot. At the foot of this really impossible hill are the swift green river, a steep bridge, a ruined fortress in a green wood, and a sulphur spring gushing white vapour from the rocks. This is Petriolo, once a famous bath, where Pope Pius II. was wont to dip his anointed person.[1] I gather that it is still used during the summer, though I did not see the bath itself. There was an inn, however, where (an old woman told me) I could have lived like a *signorone* for three *liras* a day.

At this point you are eighteen miles from Siena, and may begin to look out for the frontier

[1] Montaigne, most diligent in hunting out medicated baths in Italy, missed Petriolo. He tried two in the Sienese country — Vignone, near San Quirico, and Naviso by Montefiascone.

fortresses. There are many of them perched about upon the hillsides and ridges, — San Lorenzo, Stigliano, Fitello, and others, — but it is nine miles more before you see the city. Then you pass a village on a common, and just beyond

MONTALCINO.

that have a magnificent apparition of the mountain's flushed crown: Siena herself, carmine and white, upon her own three-capped hill. No town makes so splendid a show as this one; no hill-town in all Tuscany, nor any city in all Italy. The Zebra tower gleams like an agate, the Mangia tower is like a red lily. Splendid from any side — to be seen from twenty miles' distance

on the approach from Rome — I think this is the best view of all. The hill is so green and the city so rosy; you look upon it from an almost equal height; it seems to be sailing in the cloud. But to reach the walls you have much still to do; you must descend far into the gorge, and get up again by long circuits to the Gate of St. Mark. Thence your way is through streets of red palaces — empty streets, very silent — to the Piazza Tolomei and good fare at the Albergo La Toscana, which once housed a Tolomei chief.

APPENDIX

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANE

Since my last mention of this hero is to be here, here is as good a place as any to report his death. It was in 1328, as has been said above, at the close of a year of great business. John Villani tells the story — so well that it cannot be bettered. Let him speak for me, therefore.

"Now when Castruccio had got back Pistoja by his profound science, and care, and prowess, in the manner which we have related already, he regarrisoned and replenished the place with men and stores, and put the Ghibellines into it again; and returned to his city of Lucca with glory and honour after the fashion of an emperor in triumph; and found himself at a very height of renown and respect, such as no lord or tyrant of Italy had obtained for three hundred years or more — as the chronicle will bear out; and, moreover, lord of the

cities of Pisa and Lucca, of Pistoja and the Lunigiana, of a great part of the Genoese shore, and of more than three hundred walled towns. And then, as it pleased God, who, for the debt we owe to Nature, draws in the big with the little, and the rich with the poor, he — through excess of undue fatigues undertaken with his host at Pistoja (as standing armed at all times, now riding, now afoot, setting the guards and relieving the pickets of his force, overseeing the siege engines, cutting the trenches, ah, and working at them with his own hands lest any one should say, Catch him working in the dog-days) — he, I say, was taken with a chronic fever, whereof he sickened and fell very ill. And, in truth, more than enough good men of his, when they left Pistoja, sickened and died. Among other notables there was Master Galeasso de' Visconti of Milan, who was in Castruccio's service, but had been a great lord and tyrant on his own account before the Bavarian deprived him of his estate — lord of Milan he had been, and of Pavia, Lodi, Cremona, Como, Bergamo, Novara, and Vercelli; and he died a wretched death, a soldier in Castruccio's pay. And this showeth that a man may stretch the sentences of God, but not overpass them.

"Now Castruccio, before he fell sick, remembering that the Bavarian was on his way back from Rome, and would be offended with him for having upset his emprise of that realm, by staying in Tuscany, and by resuming the city of Pisa into his dominions against leave and authority, was afraid of what he might do — even that he might deprive him of his signiory and estate just as he had deprived Galeasso of Milan; and he was about to go to work for a secret treaty of agreement with the Florentines, when, as it pleased God, his sickness overtook him, and there he lay; and, growing worse, established his last will, leaving Henry his eldest son Duke of Lucca, and directing, that as soon as he should be gone, without any days of mourning, this Henry should post to Pisa with his cavalry and overrun the city, and so keep

his authority alive; and this done he de[r] is life, on Saturday, the third of September 1[3]...erson this Castruccio was very limber, and tall, [a] ...eat appearance, bluntish looking, not fat, fair an[d] ...clined to be pale, with straight yellow hair about a comely face. In age when he died he was forty-seven years. And a little before his death, when he knew it was upon him, he said to his closest friends: 'Here I lie adying; and when I am dead you'll see the web unravelled' — which was his Lucchese way of saying, You will see revolution, or, You will see my world depart. And he prophesied justly, as you will presently see. And, as we now know from his nearest kindred, he confessed himself, and took the sacrament decently, and had the holy oil; but he remained in his great error, never admitting that he had sinned against God by the wounds he had dealt to His holy Church, soothing his conscience with the belief that he had acted rightly for the good of the Empire and his own State. So he departed, and they kept his death a secret until the 10th September; and as he had left it to be done, so did his son Henry with his knights overrun the cities of Pisa and Lucca, and broke up assemblies of the Pisans wherever he found them. Which done he went back to Lucca and performed the dule, clothing all his people in black, and with ten horses to draw the bier, covered with silken housings and with ten flags — with the arms of the Empire two, with those of his duchy two, with his own two, and one for Pisa, one for Lucca, one each for Pistoja and Luni. So they buried him with great honour in Lucca, in the place of the Friars Minor of Saint Francis, on the 14th September. This Castruccio had been an intrepid and magnanimous tyrant, wise and wary, anxious and laborious, expert in arms, provident in warfare, highly adventurous in his undertakings, highly feared and respected; in his days he did some fine and notable feats, and proved a very scourge to his countrymen, to the Florentines, Pisans, Pistojese, and to all the Tuscan nations

in those fifteen years of his lordship over Lucca. He was cruel in that he dealt death and torture to men, thankless for the services he got to his need, desirous ever for new friends and for dependents, very proud of his estate and dominion, and above all things in the world desired to be lord of Florence and a king in Tuscany. And the Florentines rejoiced and hugged themselves at his death, scarcely able to believe that dead indeed he was." — (Gio. Vill. 10. 86.)

ON THE MUGNONE, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER IX

SIENA

I NAME the two cities of Tuscany in which it is pleasant to live to be Lucca and Siena; and they are the only two which have reckoned up pleasure among the assets of life. And I say that there are two cities in Tuscany which excel all the others in beauty, and whose beauty consists mainly in elegance; and that these are Lucca and Siena. And lastly I say that, of any two Tuscan cities which one could pick out as alike in the quantity of their charm, it would be impossible to find two more dissimilar in the quality of it than this chosen pair. For one is impossible to be hid, the other most difficult to find. One flaunts it on the top of a mountain, the other nestles darkling in a thicket. And as for the people, if the Lucchese are the salt of the earth, the Sienese are the mustard. The Lucchese have prospered quietly, the Sienese have blusterously failed. And yet, with all their recluse ways, you cannot walk the

Siena and Lucca compared.

streets of Lucca without seeing signs of great and forcible character; and flamboyant, preposterous, absurd as the Sienese have been and still are, it is not possible to affirm that any one thing they have said or done is unworthy of

NEAR SIENA.

great blood, or a proof of ignoble desire. If — and here is another likeness in diversity — if the Lucchese have left no name in history, it is because they have never tried to make one; if the Sienese, it is because they have always failed. Over and over again they have bid for a starry crown; but above that of all the Tuscan nations

their history is futile, stultifying, and outrageous. They have no literature, no Dante, no Sacchetti; no science, no Galileo; no great art, no Giotto, no Michael Angelo; no Castruccio, no Farinata, no Medici, no Machiavelli. What Florence was able to do had been clean impossible for Siena, which started earlier on the race and had the greater advantage. Money she had; but foresight, power, magnanimity, longanimity, were wanting in Siena. These things, which are testimonies and fruits of character, abounded in Florence: Siena had none of them. And yet a walk down one street of the place will reveal to you finer, rarer, more poignant, more salient character than a whole month of prying into the untouched corners of Florence; and so you will find it if you walk back along the great alley — Shakespere's "primrose path" — and compare the Sienese whom you meet with the Florentines. Sienese history is bafflingly absurd, but it touches the heart, which Florentine history seldom does. And thus you may state the difference: you must esteem but cannot love a Florentine, you must love but can hardly esteem a Sienese. I defy that erring wight, the man of sensibility and ardent associations, not to be the Des-Grieux of this good-for-nothing, flaming, dear, wheedling Manon of a nation, whose

Siena and Florence.

beauties of mind and person may be, as Mr. Ruskin used to say, parasitic, but for all that are piercingly present.

Mystery, pathos, romance are her properties; and very likely they may prove but funguses

PIAZZA SAN DOMENICO, SIENA.

when you try to set them up for absolutes, and make the poor, pretty things pose as the Sublime and the Beautiful. I am sure I don't know; but I do know what it is which stirs the pulse of every sojourner in Siena's desolate places — the blend of the tragic and the trivial. The savage, gaunt, great houses, incurably noble, and the lovely and frivolous

The properties of Siena.

people within them; the mystical, gilded art which lays a finger on its lip, and shuts up — nothing; the memories of her saints, the fragrance of their names and dust: I know that these things are desperately romantic. I know that the city cries and wails in my ears. Tragic, dauntless, high-flying race! What was said of the Celts by a Celt of old time is true of Siena, and over-true. *They went forth to war, but they always fell.* So did the Sienese — always.

Tragedy.

They lost, as they must needs, in the long tussle with Florence; they dedicated themselves to their suzerain, the Madonna, and were four times heard; but she forsook them at the fifth, in their hour of extremity. They conquered the seaboard, but never put to sea: Talamone, lonely and weed-choked, if it were theirs, was of no use. They began the greatest church in Italy, and finished no more than one quarter of it; their only good artist — and he was Michael Angelo's master — made for them his noblest work; but they broke it, or let it be broke; and one must go to Bologna now to study Della Quercia.[1] Their painters' work, which (if we are to credit Mr. L. Douglas, as I think we are not) began upon a scale

[1] I refer to the Fonte Gaja, ruins of which may be seen in the Opera del Duomo, and a dead copy on the original site in the Campo.

Cathedral Steps. Siena

unattainable by Giotto, dwindled off into a school of trite copyists and shallow chiaroscurists,

THE MARKET, SIENA.

betrayed by Pintoricchio, the driest of the Umbrians, and Sodoma, the emptiest scholar Lionardo

ever tried to fill. For grace and beauty the Sienese women have been famous, and are famous still. They are meet to be loved — but who dare love them? Quick and proud, high-spirited and vivacious, luxurious, idle, and superb at once, they are inconstant lovers, and in the old days were even so. They fought like Lapiths on the walls when Marignano and his Spaniards held that last grim leaguer of a year and a half; but when the capitulation was signed they threw themselves into their enemies' arms, and welcomed the slayers of their kin with carpets in the windows and flowers for their feet.

Or fu giammai
Gente si vana com' è la sanese?

cries the keen, great Florentine, scorning this chivalrous, feather-headed, mettlesome brood. And well he might, being of whom he was — of the conquering race. For this people went forth to war, but they always fell.

It is not the least of Dante's credentials by any means, this lightning glance of his at Siena; nor is it for nothing that of all the figures he chose to stand for the city in his dread vision of things as they were, three emerge out of the gloom and horror: Sapia, to wit, who flouted God; Albero, who tried to fly; and La Pia, who

was beautiful, unhappy, and died young.[1] As they were then, so they are now; they and they only have made their Siena; the flushed hill-city is the vesture of their spirit. Tragic, futile, amorous, ardent, unhappy, above all of them

THE CONSUMA, SIENA.

La Pia stands before time as the emblem of her nation. "Siena mi fè, disfecemi Maremma."[2]

[1] See back, Chapter II., for the consideration of this great power of Dante's.

[2] My brief summary of Sienese history, such as it is, must be sought in the Appendix to this chapter: what I have not been able to say there may be indicated here. It is that, just as character is what one sees all over Siena, so it is what one can find detailed in every page of Sienese history: the blend — if I may repeat myself — of the tragic and the futile. Not a person upon her scene but betrays some twist, some salient peak; not a biography could be made but it would be notable for some sharpness

Young men of Siena.

It is the firm opinion of the other nations of Tuscany that the Sienese are mad. I remember driving once to the city from Colle in a pelting storm of rain, and how Trombino, the pertest Florentine that ever sucked a lemon, and one of the best drivers, prepared me for the worst by loud confidences from his box. "The skies weep, signore," he said, "and well they may, for we are going among a people to whom those *imbecilli* of Volterra are as senators and statesmen." I told him that this was what they call *fiorentinismo*, and hurt him by the imputation. "To begin with, sir," he replied, "*con rispetto parlando*, I am not a Florentine. No, thank God, but a plain Pont'-a-Mensolano. Moreover, all the world knows that I am telling you the truth. These people of Siena — why, did your lordship never hear of the Grand Duke Leopoldo, what he

of disaster, some splendid push for fame, and disastrous recoil, some heart-ache, some cry prolonged and solitary. Provenzano Salvani, for example, no doubt the greatest of the Sienese — upon what does his fame rest if not upon his sardonic end in the field of Colle, his death, and the rout of his host, which depended upon a comma? Pandolfo Petrucci — how high he soared, what a palace he built! He was the Magnificent for a season; yet the person of a vicious, pretty baggage of a Salicottina dragged him down into the mire. Pienza, a broad city without citizens, is the ridiculous monument of Æneas Sylvius, who sat the throne of Peter and is otherwise famous for a luxurious tale. Saint Catherine, true daughter of her nation, coaxed and stung the Popes into Rome, but she could not make them Christians. And I don't think any failure recorded of any son or daughter of Siena is more pathetic to consider than this of hers.

replied to the Sanesi when they asked him for

SIENA.

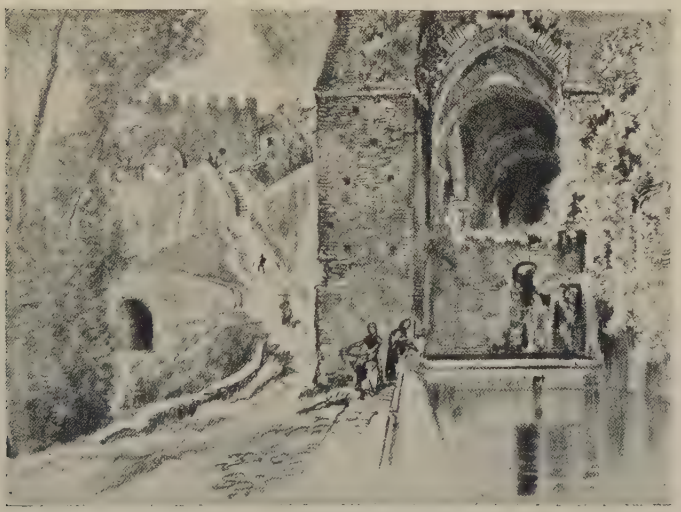
the profits of the *dazio* for ten years, to build themselves a *manicomio? 'Manicomio? Chè,*

chè!' says his Excellency, 'what next? Shut your gates, my brothers, and lock them, and there is your *manicomio* ready made, and all your madmen inside it.'[1] Now, certainly, he would never have made a speech like that, to which all Europe would listen, unless he had good reason."

It is not true that the Sienese are mad, but it is quite true that they have strongly marked idiosyncrasy, very hard to describe, but finding its readiest outlet in "peacockery." Processions, displays, spectacles, and shows — these things are innate. Just as with us, when we think well of a compatriot we entertain him at dinner, so the Sienese give him a procession. And as our notion of a public holiday seems incompletely realised without a bugler upon the box-seat of a four-horse brake, so theirs can only be satisfied by tossing flags. Florence has her day of San Giovanni, her Easter Saturday and Giorno dei Grilli; but processions are a small part of these: a general junketting is more truly what goes on. Whereas in Siena, at the festivals of Saint Catherine or of the Virgin Mary, or at that of Corpus Domini, whatever solemnities mark the

[1] This is a good story of Trombino's, and shows that a Lorrainer could wield a rapier. Compared with it, Lorenzo's gibe is bludgeon-work. "To a Sienese who condoled with him upon his eyesight, and added that the air of Florence was bad for the eyes, Lorenzo retorted, 'And that of Siena for the brain.'" — Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, 301.

day — and sometimes it may be horse-racing, and always it is Mass — one begins it and ends it with processions, music, banners to the wind. The young men are extremely expert with flags, and very small provocation is needed — a birthday, a party of pleasure, five-and-twenty francs in hand



FONTE OVILE, SIENA.

— to set the *alfieri* twirling down the streets with the solemn gaiety of dervishes, tossing their great silken banners, now up, now down, now level with the telegraph-wires, now carpets for the pavement, now drapery for the slim body of the handler, and becoming his sinuous graces mighty well. Clothes again! They are very fond of

mediæval dress, parti-coloured trunks, slashes and points, doublets, short cloaks, red caps and plumes: "targetted tailzies," as Knox used to call them, they wear them bravely and admire each other. One after another the *contrade* have their day of flagging. In Saint Catherine's honour the Goose struts before every door in Fontebranda, and the flag-bearers dance before her silver image up and down her street just as David did before the ark. The Madonna of Provenzano has her day, San Bernardino his; the Madonna del Voto is never forgotten; on two days of the year all the *contrade* together vie with each other who shall make the greatest display; and the city bristles with the totem-signs of chosen creatures. The Snail's horns are exalted, the Giraffe snuffs war in the air, and says among the captains, "Ha, ha!" The Goose defies the Panther, the Dragon and the Grub, worms alike, forget their common parent. They know that men will be ready to die this day that their name may be glorious; and that, likely enough, some man will die. Then indeed, as Mr. Heywood says, husband and wife, should they have come together from opposing signs, will separate for the occasion; and the woman will go to her father's house, "there to exult or weep" in her nation's fate. For though Siena is a nation, it

Siena from Sant' Agata.

contains seventeen nations within its walls, not one of which has a good word to say for another.[1]

But I have been led away from Sienese youth, which I must describe as flamboyant, and from Sienese maidenhood, which, of a surety, is not coy. Flaming is the word for her young men, so soon set afire, but superb for her young women, so dangerous to importune. They give you to understand that they are there to be wooed; but the same lazy eyelids proclaim that they may hardly be won.

Maidens of Siena.

Doubt not but that there are girls of Siena of the pleading, tender, die-away sort, divine children, dangerous to men. Of such was Aurelia Gualandi, whose tale is yet to be told. Also there are the secret, slow-smiling, green-eyed, ivory-pale women celebrated by Matteo, son of Giovanni, who are to be found not only in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, but at Mass in the churches or with children on the Lizza. But the typical Sienese virgin is not one of these; rather she is tall, lithe, free-moving as a panther, hath a bold glance and a very high head. *Incessu patet Dea:* her gait is Dian's if her deeds are not. Nor are they often. All things seem lawful to her; she walks thorny paths with the light foot of a

[1] See Mr. W. Heywood's *Palio of Siena* for a popular, but most excellent account of these strange affairs.

nymph; she dips her hands in muddy pools, but fouls them not. Of such was Livia, the divine,

PALAZZO TOLOMEI, SIENA.

the remarked Livia, with whom you shall be acquaint before this book is one chapter the

heavier; and a good note in the Appendix hereto will give you the names and deeds of three more.

They were, then, a people of French habit, a chivalrous people — frank, noble, attracted by the best of its kind, furious lovers of good alike and evil. They loved the Lady of heaven, but they

THE SERVI, SIENA.

loved no less the Lady of the stews — that imperious, kindly, beautiful, but altogether abominable Venus of the plebs, who maddened their Checho Angiolieri and drained their Pandolfo down to the lees. It is most pertinent to inquire what sort of outlet this people found, what sort of a flood-mark, so to speak, they left upon the

shores of Time; for mark, besides a pathetic name, they must needs have made.

Literature,

What mark? None in literature, that's certain. One poet, Checho Angiolieri — unless Perfetti, the *improvvisatore*, whom Monsieur de Brosses admired, is to be reckoned; one novelist, San Bernardino; one humanist, Æneas Sylvius; one historian, Malavolti, with nothing but volume to recommend him; and the tale is told. Mr. L. Douglas, in a recent work, gives two bad reasons for the absence of literary faculty, and one good one — so excellent, indeed, that it is impossible to have a better. "The Sienese," he says, *thirdly*, "were not a literary people." Can there be a better reason for the absence of literature in a race of men? That the Sienese, as he urges in his *firstly* and *secondly*, "wasted their energies in political strife," is beside the mark; for what else, pray, did every other people in Tuscany? Or if political excitement forbade artistic energy, why, as he labours afterwards to show, were the painters so active? Had he rather pointed out that literature demands leisure of the heart, — which may perfectly subsist in the midst of a whirlwind of politics, — and that in Siena there never was any such blessing, I should have had no quarrel with him. Both terms of that pro-

Piazza San Giovanni, Siena.

position are true. Leisure of the heart can always be secured by the poet whose heart insists

THE CATHEDRAL, SIENA.

upon it. Dante had it, though he was seethed in the Florentine ferment, and wandered abroad

from bitterness to bitterness. Yet he had it. That heart which he gave into the green-eyed lady's keeping in her ninth year he never asked back again.

and love-affairs.

But the Sienese never had their hearts at rest. Two love-affairs at once kept them continually astir, neither of them within the Florentine grasp, and neither of them inducive of literary exercise. The first was chivalry, the meat of the eyes; the second piety, the wine of the soul. These are ardours which involve a splendid strenuousness in pursuit fatal to letters; and they were blent here in a way peculiar to the Sienese among Italian peoples. The Sienese were militant pietists, devout chevaliers. Their service of the Virgin was exactly feudal; she was their suzerain, their liege lady. At one time or another every armigerous male in the city must have put his hands between her hands and sworn to be her man. There is room for passion in all this, but none for artistry, without which literature will not thrive. If Dante was too great, Petrarch was, in a sense, too small a man to have been a citizen of the Virgin's city. So there was not enough freedom from preoccupation either for a humorist like Sacchetti, or a miniaturist of Boccaccio's sort. In letters, as in most other fine things, 'tis love that makes the world go

round; and it may be love of God, or country, or a woman. But another love there must be mingled with it — the love of paper and ink. For that kind of love the Sienese had no time to spare.

Let us pry more narrowly into the city. By

THE RED PALACE, SIENA.

position it is one of great outlooks, and can be magnificently seen from any point of the compass; but it is unique, I believe, in this, that within the walls there are great views. Siena, like the king's daughter, is all glorious within, but, unlike the damsel, she can see herself so. The hill on which she stands is three-peaked — one more than Parnassus; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that this hill, whose highest

Architecture and prospect.

point bears the cathedral, is like a star of five points, whereof there are three greater and two lesser rays.[1] From any one of these you may look upon two others, and as often as not see yet other two beyond. From the Lizza you see past San Domenico, whose ugliness not even Sienese prestige can redeem, to the ray upon which the cathedral stands. This gives you — odd effect! — the grey dome in front of the bell-tower, the whole north side in severe profile, and the top of the Baptistry like a ragged cliff. The background of your picture is of hills grey and thunderous — the mountains of Volterra. From the steps of the Servite church there is as good a view, if not better; from the market-place at the back of the Palace, from the top of the Via Sant' Agata: and all these prospects of purple, white, and rose — sweet-pea colour — with bright green interspersed, are to be had without passing the walls.

But just as Dante, by the twist of his genius,

[1] The five rays of the star end in the five great gates of Siena, to which steep streets run down into the gorge along the spines of the rock. Porta Camollia, Porta Pispini, Porta Romana, Porta San Marco, are the gates — these and the Gate of Fontebranda. The culmination of the star itself is where the church stands, on a solitary spur immediately above a cliff. You reach it, you leave it by stairs. You look upon its striped side, from San Domenico, across a glen clothed now by russet-purple roofs, green only at the bottom, where vineyards are still fruitful and shade abundant. Out of this live rock, out of the heart of Siena, the cool water flows which brims a fountain at every gate — Fontebranda, Fontegiusta, Fonte Nuova, and so on.

is not apparently Florentine, so Siena, by thrust of character, is not obviously Tuscan. Something

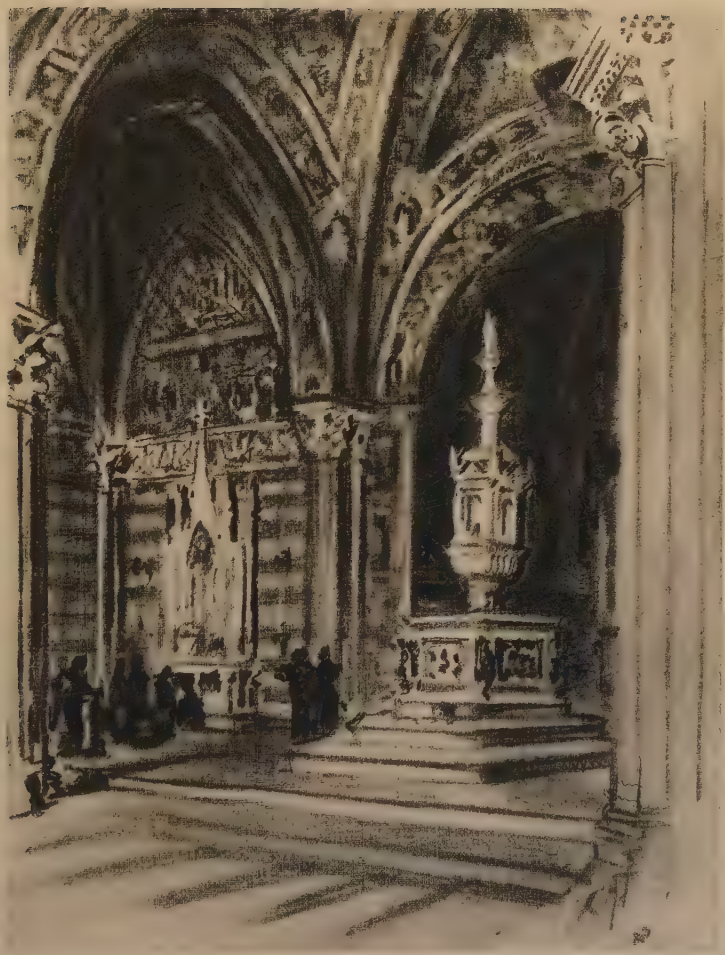
SIENA.

at once rational and gay, a plain habit with something light-hearted, marks the long, yellow-faced,

broad-eaved streets of Florence, Arezzo, and Pistoja, and is to be discerned in towns of more individuality, towns like Lucca and Pisa. There are whole quarters of Siena where you won't see it at all. A typical Florentine palace of the Quattrocento is the Riccardi. The Strozzi is of the same order, but carried up to the superlative. The Pitti is the dream of a megalo-maniac. But compare with these the great Sienese hotels of the same century; remember that magnificent red house on the left arc of the Campo.[1] There is an allure upon it, a grace, a distinction, a bid for the apple which the Florentines knew not of. Even the Piccolomini, Rossellino's though it be, has (to my eyes) a curious felicity of design, and a choiceness denied to what he did for the Rucellai in Florence, and certainly denied to the great Strozzi heap. But it is when one comes to the Gothic houses, the Tolomei, for instance, or the Palazzo Pubblico, that one finds out wherein the specific flower of Sienese beauty still blows. There are whole streets of the like of these[2] —

[1] As for the Campo, Montaigne says with excellent judgment, "The Piazza of Siena is the finest of any city in the world." I am very sure he is right, if great palaces, space, and a tower like an aloe-blossom have anything to do in a comparison. Next to it, in Italy, I should put the Prato della Valle of Padua. These two places seem to me as if they had been sprung whole — *totus teres*, etc. — out of a man's brain.

[2] I don't mean, of course, that there are whole streets of thirteenth-century palaces, but of palaces inspired by thirteenth-century art.



Baptistry Siena

empty streets, left for you and the wind to wander as you list. Here are the places wherein to woo the muse of Siena; for chivalry has thriven here, or there is nothing expressive in architecture.

Siena's, however, is a case where architecture was only good when it was domestic. Its people felt Gothic when they built a palace: in church-building they did worse than most of their neighbours. You will find no church in Siena worth an hour's serious contemplation. Personally, I may wonder at the Duomo — and I do;[1] but I am not going to suppose it good building; and nobody pretends that it is good Gothic. Like many other churches in Tuscany — like the Duomo of Florence for one — it dazzles you, takes your breath away, and so far succeeds. If that were the simple ambition of its contriver, he has his reward. All the world wonders and applauds. Inside, there is no gainsaying that the stark measures taken do produce an effect not unlike that of a fine Gothic cathedral-church. It seems to have been got by outlining. With striped columns, with picked-out ribs, starry spandrils, loaded window-soffits, dappled pavement — well, with all this you do

Churches.

[1] Or, rather, I have wondered in my day. Let me refer the reader who cares for such a little matter to *Earthwork out of Tuscany*, 3rd edition, p. 135.

succeed in getting the kind of dædal illusion which pure Gothic gives you by more lawful means; but of course you get none of the mystery of Gothic. The Sienese did, in fact, by outlining in paint and coloured stone what the French did by masses and forms. The effect is nothing so good; it is enormously heavy; but it is an effect, a strong effect, and, incredible as it may seem, a Gothic effect.[1]

Painting.

Lovers of the Queen of heaven, they have not been able to build her a house; but have they painted her portrait? Assuredly they have tried, as never lover yet, to show her to us as she showed herself to them, without spot, utterly kind, of peerless beauty, yet a crowned queen. To see Sienese paintings is to have no doubt of this. Their Madonnas have a beauty not of this world; but their paintings are not pictures. The gallery at Siena is evidence of love, but not of art. Just as a doting husband will dress his wife delightfully, hang her little person with jewels and chains, and set a crown upon her empty little head, and

[1] For one instance out of many of unlawful practice, take the line of popes' heads under the clerestory windows; what is that but a way of embossing? But to emboss a building with popes' heads which cannot even be seen for what they are, is more than unlawful — is outrageous. The culmination of busyness, overlaying and overdoing, is to be sought in the Piccolomini Library, whose frescoes, if they were not gilt, would be nothing. It is as if one were to keep one's books in a jewel-case.

with every ounce of value he puts on her will be spending and allaying his frenzy of adoration — so I find the Sienese painters to have been, from Duccio, whom Mr. Douglas so strangely exalts, to Neroccio, beloved by Mr. Berenson. They loved Madonna far above their force as

THE OSSERVANSA, SIENA.

artists; but, mercifully for themselves and us, they had gold-leaf in plenty and a wonderful knack of pattern. Herein they found their consolation and their snare. They thought they were showing her worthy of their love when they were showing their love worthy of her. Their pictures are less pictures than panels of conventional ornament,

and, as such, excellence can go no farther. I don't suppose the world can show a vision more exquisitely frail and lovely than a picture of Matteo of Siena's; and yet a vision it is, lighter than vanity itself, and emptier, and easier pricked, if one had the heart to do it. And the truth, of course, is that it lay not in the Sienese nature to do anything wholly or long.[1]

[1] Two things will strike the candid visitor to the Belle Arti of Siena. The first is that the Sienese painted little but the Madonna; the second, that they painted her flat. A rocky background here and there, a suggestion of an horizon somewhere, a sky which is neither black nor scratched gold, semblances of men and of angels, are not enough to break down the law. So far as life is concerned, all these things are hieroglyphs: life has nothing to do with the business; the world is a cloister-garden, a place of temporary sojourn fit to dream in. It is the fact that the Sienese painters were illuminators from first to last, with the one possible exception of Ambrogio Lorenzetti. From Duccio, the Byzantine, through Taddeo and Sano, to Benvenuto the embroiderer, to Matteo and Neroccio, the neurotic and the fantastic, there is but one subject, the Sacra Conversazione, one treatment, the gilder's. Whether with the blue background and diapered crimson curtain of fresco, or the *fondo d'oro* of the altarpiece, the miniaturist method persists; and it is equally impossible to deny the charm it has, or the speed with which it can cloy. Both are due to its cloistral, recollected air, its flavour of the oratory, its intense limitation, its lavish ornament and extreme beauty. It is undoubtedly true that the man who calls himself a miserable sinner every day for a year either forgets it or doubts it profoundly at the end of the term. So here, if you steadfastly behold a painted ecstasy, you may be rapt out of yourself for a season; but not if you behold nothing else; not if you continue to behold it for years. But decoration, for example! It would indeed be difficult to get more magnificent wall-covering than the great devotional fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico of this place. Types of more refined spiritual beauty than those of Benvenuto and Matteo I do not believe to exist. And here, at least, are two Sienese painters who are illustrated by life (if they do not illustrate it); for these lovely, frail, desirous women are national; they are Sienese, than whom there are none more beautiful

But then — all deductions made: history denied, painter's work decried — what a city of cities Siena remains! All her gallant, impossible memories — the Spending Club, whose house still stands; Checho and his beautiful wench at Fontebranda; Provenzano begging in the Campo; Pier Pettignano, the inspired comb-seller; poor fragrant Saint Catherine, whose shrivelled head you may still see if you care; Pandolfo Petrucci doting on a bad girl; Æneas Sylvius penning a love-tale and making epigrams upon the Miraculous Blood of Mantua; Livia

in all long Italy. Matteo's Madonna, in a halo of golden straw, walks the Via di Città at this hour, with the same ivory tints, the same doubtful smile. Her green eyes sparkle and peer as ever they did; her slim fingers play with each other as you speak to her; they would go on playing if you spilled your heart over her feet. A lazy beauty; either she hath vice or she is stupid. Half the host of Benvenuto's heaven may be seen in the Campo on those white-hot days of August when the Palio is running. As for Neroccio's impossible blondes — impossibly fair, impossibly slim — with their hair like pale silk and their faces like pink peonies, these belong to some still seraglio of the mind, have lived neither on earth nor live in heaven. Gracious images of green-sick adoration, nymphs of the nympholept — look at them, wonder, desire (if you choose): they are art, and good art, but they are the art of them who believe that the world is a garden enclosed. Painting is more than outline and surface ornament; Giotto's Florence knew better, and Carpaccio's Venice too, and Mantegna's Padua. It may be a question, when discussing the absolute in this matter, how far any Italian painting of any school whatever may stand beside that of the Low Countries: my say has been said; the quarrel is an old one and somewhat musty. But, like for like, there can be none at all that where the Florentine pushed up from height to height of mastery over scope and method, the Sienese never rose above a softened and elegant ideography. Fra Angelico himself, the painter of faëry without peer, is a realist when confronted with Sano di Pietro.

Fausta in Dian's buskins and white tunic[1] — absurd, pitiful, gallant, lonely race! Your unthrift is to me more splendid than all the snug Florentine *masserigia!* They tell the tale of the Madonna of Provenzano, that hollow-eyed, armless goddess of three centuries' devotion, that she constituted herself patroness of that ill-famed quarter of the city, did miracles upon the bruised bodies of her clients, and was adored by them all. Of what secrets was she not a partaker? Of what griefs was she not consolatrix? What halting feet did she not sustain? It is highly characteristic of a city which never thought of anything but love of women, and whose virtues, as well as whose failings, sprang from that prepossession that they should invoke such a goddess. Patroness of

[1] There were three Hippolytas in the field: the Signora Livia Fausta, the Signora Laodamia Forteguerra — was ever a more glorious name? — and the Signora Piccolomini. The occasion was the Spanish leaguer: and here they are, as Monluc saw them in their gear of war:

"Toutes les dames de la ville de Sienne se despartirent en trois bandes. La première estoict conduicte par la Signora Forteguerra, qui estoict vestue de violet, et toutes celles qui la suivoient aussi, ayant son accoustrement en façon d'une nymphe, court et monstrant le brodequin; la seconde estoict la Signora Piccolomini, vestue de satin incarnardin, et sa troupe de mesme livrée; la troisième estoict la Signora Livia Fausta, vestue toute de blanc, comme aussi estoict sa suitte avec son enseigne blanche."

A picture, surely, for Ghirlandajo! And here is Monluc's tribute:

"Il ne sera jamais, dames siennoises, que je n'immortalise vostre nom, tant que le livre de Monluc vivra; car, à la vérité, vous estes dignes d'immortelle louange, si jamais femmes le feurent." Gallant tribute to gallant doing; but it all availed them nothing.

hetairæ! One can imagine a more ignoble office, I think.

APPENDIX

SIENESE HISTORY

To say — as I do say — that of history in the proper sense, of significant, correlated history, Siena has none whatever, is only to insist that her unhappy biography, if one could by pains get at it, will be found to be the sum of her character and environment. The things which stir the pulse of every sojourner in her solitudes — to which I have abundantly referred — are very worthy to be felt, proper objects of inquiry for the archæologist, and not to be lost sight of by the historian who shall build with his bricks. They may some day give substance to a history of the Tuscan race, but they will never make a history of Siena — as of late Mr. Douglas has essayed to compose it. Such a thing as that Siena has not to give to him or any learned man; nor could we have had it by any possibility. Let us examine this matter a little.

Born, as every other Tuscan nation was, of a Frankish graft upon an Etruscan stock, she endured, with every other, the same phases of development, and shared, with every other but one,[1] the same unavoidable fate. Whether Bishop or Gastaldo was the nucleus round which the little body-politic was formed, matters nothing to the traveller in her quiet and shadowed streets. Suffice it, for present purposes, that we find a commune of Siena in the twelfth century at war with that of Florence in 1141. They warred about a frontier town, — Semifonte the lost, in this case — and strengthened themselves by the very act of loss, as mostly happens in warfare. Wars, too, if raids and counter-raids can be so called, with

[1] That one, of course, was Florence, born to dominate all.

the feudal chiefs of the hills absorb the next full century; slowly the commune is too many for the mountain thieves — Aldobrandeschi of Monte Amiata, Pannocchieschi in the dreary Volterran country, brigand-haunted then as now; one does not need their names. Florence went through the same courses with her Uberti and Alberti, having been driven to them by the same needs. What Tuscan state did not? Before a quarter of the thirteenth century had gone by, the last of her neighbours fell in to Siena; then began an age of possible government. The rule of the Ventiquattro was set up under Provenzano Salvani, greatest of the Sienese, and Bonaguida Lucari, one of the most pious,[1] and had a splendid setting-off. The Ghibellines of Florence, chased from their own city, became guests and allies: one of them was Farinata degli Uberti. In 1260 was fought the red field of Montaperti, by virtue of which crowning mercy, for four or five years, Florence virtually lay at the feet of Siena, and was only saved from lying literally there by the daring and patriotism of Farinata. Every reader of Dante has pictured the scene at Empoli: all the savage little States yapping and snarling at the beaten Florence, and Farinata confronting them.[2] They yapped and snarled, but they did no more. Followed three terrible years, each with its smashing blow to Siena and the Ghibellines: Benevento in 1266, Tagliacozzo in 1268, Colle in 1269. In this last affair the capture, death, and shameful fate of Provenzano Salvani made it out of the question that Siena could ever be more than a provincial town. Now here too, except for the last struggle of all, when she was brought into the vortex set swirling by Cæsar Borgia, and went down in it, the relations of Siena with history cease.

As for the general stages of her biography, feuds, vendettas,

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[1] With San Bernardino, he seems to have been the only Sienese who knew how to combine piety and common sense.

[2] See back, Chapter XVI. of this volume.

and faction-fights which count for much in all Tuscan story, make up the rest of Siena's. They were never so paralysing as the Florentine or Aretine, nor pursued to such ravenous lengths as the Pisan, nor spread so widely as the Pistolese; in fact, they were confined to two families, and made little or no stir outside the contado. The Salimbeni and Tolomei were protagonists in the blood-spattered little melodrama which began about 1315 and did not stop until Duke Cosimo de' Medici stopped all. Independently of these squabbles the story of government ran the usual Tuscan course. The Twenty-Four went down in the ruin of Tagliacozzo. It had been a temperately compounded oligarchy, such as has always been found to suit best to the Italian temper, half feudal, half mercantile. The Nine who followed them were frankly *bourgeois*, with money to lend and bills to discount — peace-at-any-price men. The plague killed them, and the Twelve reigned in their stead, a government of small tradesmen. Theirs was the day of the Condottieri (whom they and their predecessors had called up to save them): free-riding, free-booting gentry with resounding, brazen names — "Enemies of God," Companions of the Hat, Companions of St. George, White Companies, Hawkwood, and the likes of Hawkwood; petty raiders making way for greater men of larger ideas, Castruccio, Sforza, Piccinnino, Montefeltro. A government bolstered by such buttresses could not last, and did not. In 1368 the remnants of the old factions — the Ventiquattro, the Nove, and what not — arose, carried the Palace by assault, and made opportunity for a lower class yet: that of the artisans. Those were great days for the *popol minuto* — 1371 or thereabouts; days for the Company of the Grub and their redoubtable leader, one Domenico an old-clothes man, with a pretty knack of piety and murder.

But why pursue the tale, which is that of every town in Tuscany, and is exemplified once and for all in that of Florence? So far, the reader will see, every step can be

watched on the Arno; so forth also it can be matched. For upon the shoulders of Domenico and his *riformatori* of Siena, just as surely as Cosimo Vecchio upon those of the Ciompi and their sequels, there climbed up one Pandolfo Petrucci to the tyrant's chair; and he might have held it, as the Medici held theirs, but for two reasons. The Visconti-Valois marriage (old affair of Milan) let Europe into Italy, and Pandolfo took the wrong side — here is one reason; and the other is that he had no descendants worth a rush and no collaterals either. I observe that Mr. L. Douglas[1] thinks meanly of Pandolfo. Machiavelli thought highly of him, and Professor Villari shares the opinion. Students of the man and his times will take their choice of sides, remembering, however, that Machiavelli had had a hand in most of the rubbers he reports. Pandolfo's fate was to contend with Cæsar Borgia, at long odds. Against the papal battalions what had he but the name of the King of France? It may fairly be said that he made a match of it. He outlived Pope Alexander, saw one of his sons made Cardinal by Pope Julius, and died leaving his tyranny intact. His son Borghese was a worthless bully who could neither use his inheritance nor procure its use by a successor. He was worse than Piero de' Medici in this at least, that he could not beget a Lorenzo.

The Petrucci dynasty, so to call it — a dynasty of one — came to an end in 1524; and then afterwards the end of Siena as a State was a matter of a few years. The Emperor Charles marched in in 1526, and his Spaniards were expelled, by the gust of a dying flicker of patriotism, in 1536. But in 1553 Don Garcia brought them back, and the end was at hand. Of that bitter siege I shall say nothing, but refer the reader to Captain Napier and the Commentaries of Monluc, as brave a Gascon as ever crooked an arm. In spite of this matchless Monluc, in spite of Piero Strozzi, an explosive Florentine outlaw, in spite of the noble lady Livia Fausta and her

[1] In his painstaking "History" of Siena.

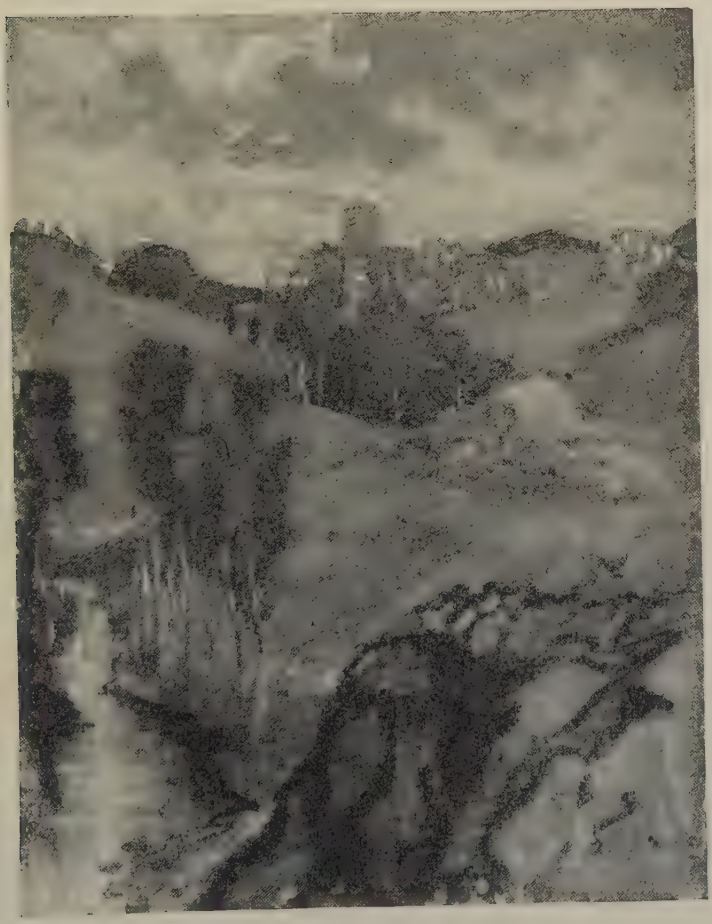
company of Amazons, in spite of Brandano and his soothsay, in spite of Madonna, in 1555 Monluc walked out, a beaten man of a beaten master, and Marignano walked in. Two years later Siena was handed over to Duke Cosimo of Florence. Here is the tale told. First Tuscan state to be marked out by Florence for conquest, she was the last to fall. But why she was so marked, and why she was doomed to fall, are questions which belong not to Sienese history, but to Florentine, to European history. I shall add here, and with that pleasure one always has in recommending a good book, that Mr. William Heywood seems to me the only English writer who really knows, and has been able to convey, the specific nature of this extraordinary people. The three of his books best known to me are, *Our Lady of August and the Palio of Siena* (1899); *The Ensamples of Fra Filippo, a Study of Mediæval Siena* (1901); *A Pictorial Chronicle of Siena* (1902). All these are published by the excellent and expert Signor Torrini in the Via di Città. Mr. Heywood's work has that rare combination of humour and erudition, and that even rarer blend of the critical with the enthusiastic faculty, which makes good and wise readers as it is followed from stave to stave. To love Italy, and to give her lovers, a man must be a classic, something of a pedant, and a humanist. The past lives in every angle of the road; the forms are so precise, the air so clear, that exact scholarship is of the essence of the contract; and yet one must be tender with the people, see them the best thing in their country, be patient, be just, and yet be a lover. Italy has been well served before now by men of our race. Evelyn loved her, so did Dennis, and Storey, the American sculptor, whose "Roba di Roma" should have earned him something like immortality. At this hour Mr. Carmichael and Mr. Heywood, each in his own way, are upholding the tradition. But I give the palm to Mr. Heywood.

CHAPTER X

THE PORTRAIT OF LIVIA

When Livia told me that she was eighteen, and tall for her age, I could only reply that her years had done well for her, since inches became her. She admitted it without any kind of complacency; she glanced over her shoulder to the little mirror and looked at her straight back. "Non c'è male," she said, and then, turning about, nodding brightly a farewell to her counterfeit — "E pure bellina — It's rather pretty"; which undoubtedly it was. Her father, who was mending one of his boots with part of a cardboard box, paused from his labours, tack in mouth, to admire this remarkable progeny of his. He looked her up, he looked her down, he nodded, chuckled, rubbed his hands. "One would not find her fellow in all the nations of Siena," he said to me. "Senta, signore — she rears up her crest like the Mangia tower." Livia then, not choosing to be praised by any one but herself, flamed into scolding and

drove him out-of-doors to his business. Ad-



ON THE WAY TO SIENA.

miring her more than ever, he departed with uplifted hands. "Cosa straordinaria! E quas

un arcagnuolo! Davvero, davvero, è quasi Gabriello!"

I should like to do her portrait in Boccaccio's manner, for she certainly belongs to his gallery.

Livia, at eighteen, to the indolent graces of a growing girl was able to add the self-possession and stored knowledge of the world which you look for in a woman of thirty. Her composure and arrogance could not be an offence, because they seemed so reasonable and she so good-tempered. Nothing startled her, nothing stirred her to raptures either of wonder or delight, nothing hurt, nothing disturbed, and, so far as I can tell, nothing shocked her. I have seen her walk through the crowded market, and cross the Campo when it was packed with men, as calmly, as unconsciously, as idly as a queen might pass down a corridor between her ranked and bowing suitors. She had a long, slow, swinging manner of going, carried her head very high, and looked straight in front of her. Comments were many: the Sienese are great amateurs of beauty and very outspoken: they affected her not at all. If she became aware—and she was ever aware—of some person to whom she wished to speak, she stopped and said her say, but rarely looked at him. Her voice was low and thrilling; there was the soft blur upon it—like the bloom on a plum—which

her nation has. In speech she was short, clear, and succinct; it was impossible — often unhappily so — to doubt her meaning. She was the most vividly beautiful girl I have ever seen, without any kind of exception; and those are not terms to apply at random. Pretty, handsome, lovely, charming, a many young woman may be; but she who is beautiful (it must be said) shares that quality with the Venus of Milo, Helen of Troy, Desdemona, Imogen, Ethel Newcome, and Diana Vernon — and with nobody else. Therefore she belongs to the narrowest circle, the most exclusive society in this world or the next. Livia, without cavil, was a member of that society; and I had rather state it thus bluntly than essay the auctioneer's catalogue, the "Item, a grey eye or so," which Shakespere has made ridiculous. Her eyes, by the way, were more green than grey, and the effect she had upon one was that of a moonlight night, compact as that is of ivory pallors and velvet darks, at once clear and cold, severe and calm.

I may add that I never saw her wear a hat. That wondrous halo of lemon straw which the maids of her city affect would have become her as her crescent sets Dian apart from her bevy; but Livia chose to be crowned only by her black hair. She denied herself many other advantages:

she was capable of high rages, and looked then like Medusa; but mostly she was superbly still. Her tongue could be shrewish — nay, it could bite like vitriol, but mostly it was idle. I don't know that she was affectionate; I never saw any kindly passion in her, and only once her steady eyes dimmed by tears. She was always friendly with me, after our first introduction, which I must show to have been a delicate affair, and never failed to salute me in the street, though, after her usual fashion, she never seemed to see me there. I don't know that it matters much, or that it would be very interesting, otherwise I could tell how I have accompanied her to feasts and festivals, to processions and Church mysteries, have sat with her at singular tables, and knelt by her side at dusky little shrines unknown to any casual travellers. It seems better to tell how she expounded to me the cult of the great Madonna of Siena, and in so doing herself and her father's nation; and for a beginning of that I must show how she and I became acquainted.

I was on the Lizza one breezy May morning — that wooded spur from which you look past the rock of San Domenico to that of Città, and have the whole length of that wonderful striped church in focus, with its light-poised dome thrust, by accident of the ground, actually in front of its

sable and white guardian, the bell-tower. If I tired of this, I had the far view of Monte Maggio to feast upon, and all the purple west. About me and above were sunlight and the fragrance of flowering trees; below my feet the players at

PIAZZA, SIENA.

pallone, who never forego the grand gesture for the great shot. It seemed good for me to be there — but then, desiring to smoke, I found my match-box empty, and was a baffled voluptuary indeed. "These are my crosses, Mr. Wesley," — one remembers Fitzgerald's good story.

Now I suppose that I had looked round about

in that vaguely harassed manner an Englishman is so ready to wear. I have no doubt of it. In so doing I became aware of some one by my side, courteous, deferential, a Tuscan. An old, anxious man, hawker of matches, must have been on the watch: he had seen his opportunity bursting-ripe, and had pounced upon it. His tender air constrains me still. "Ecco, signore, fiammiferi — buoni, freschi," said he. It was not, believe me, that he wished to trade, but that he was resolute to please. The instinct is as old as the Cæsars; and so is that which moved him next—the decision to improve upon so auspicious a moment. I selected my matches, paid him, and saluted; he fixed me with a penetrating, melancholy eye, and with a wheedling air inquired, "Vuol vedere una raggazza?"

Upon my soul, this was a very different thing; and yet I suppose ten men out of eleven would have avoided, as I did, with my "Chè raggazza?" He bowed his head, but did not cease to pierce me with those melting, deprecating eyes. "Mia figliuola," he said gently, and for some minutes I was dumb.

He too being at the end of his tether, I was enabled to reflect upon this singular proposition. The new is the unexpected, the unexpected the irregular, the irregular either shocking or a bore

to my orderly nation; but this was a chain of habit which I was young enough then to discard. And, apart from it, there seemed no reason particularly cogent why I should not see this person's daughter, and many reasons why I should. *Homo sum*, etc. — here was one, and a plausible argument; the gratification of curiosity, the achievement of an adventure, the gratification of a solicitous parent — here were sufficient others. To be short, I wrote his address upon a card: Tortoni, Tertulliano, Vicolo al Vento, No. — 4° and promised to wait upon him in the course of the afternoon. He professed himself my servant, his house my inn, and withdrew.

This Vicolo al Vento is an alley neither savoury nor polite which runs out of the Via del Rè into the Piazza di Provenzano. I knew it for the recognised parade-ground of the beggars, who meet there one day in the week to apportion the coverts, as you might say, which each is to draw. The ground-floors of its houses are let out as black little wine-shops, coffee-shops, tinsmiths' and chandlers' shops. These I had seen and disapproved. But now I was to penetrate deeper into the arcana; and I did it not without excitement, for my transient view of the mystagogues who ruled there, got, so far from my inn windows,

had asserted them to be Jews, procuresses, demi-reps, and unfortunates of all sorts and either sex. However, it appeared that my eyes had been too sweeping. The first floor of number —, for instance, announced a Captain of Light Horse — a perfectly reputable employment; the second floor had a card pinned to the door with the name Bazzi, Antinoö — I quarrelled with the Christian name; the third floor sheltered the Vedova Sassetti, who was a midwife; and the fourth, though it did not say so, my Tortoni, Tertulliano, whom I suspected to be an old scoundrel.

He was bowing in his doorway as I reached it, bowing very low and making passes with his hands. He looked uncommonly like a hoary spider webbing me to my destruction, and I could fancy with what bright and avid eyes he would begin his meal — his *fera pasta*, like Ugolino's, upon the top of my head. He was quite without speech, but his hands were his eloquent apologists: backing and bowing, weaving his spells, he ushered me into a low white-walled room, where from an open window leaned a girl, her elbows upon the ledge, her eyes fixed upon the street below. I could see nothing of her except her back, which was clothed in a print blouse and green skirt, her hair lustrous black and built up into a tower, and, through the glass,

her severe profile, like the head of Ligieia on a coin of Syracuse, silver-cold, remote, and keen. Not more aloof could Jezebel have shown as she looked down upon the Man of God in the court-yard than did this proud daughter of Tortoni,

MARKET, SIENA.

Tertulliano, upon the atoms two hundred feet or more below her feet.

This, then, was the position. My chattering, most agitated host was in misery which I could hardly guess at. He dared not call his daughter from the window, and could do nothing without her. He tried to make a joke of it, and me a

party to the joke. He affected a mock despair — ruefully enough — and looked to see if I would take it. But I would not. Instead, I looked about me at a humble but perfectly decent room. A curtained bed was in a corner, a rep-covered sofa against a wall. Above it hung a confectioner's almanac, which showed a young man, very *décolleté* in a blue and white vest and pink socks, rowing a lady in pale mauve up an Alpine waterfall. The lady had a scarlet parasol in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and boots which buttoned nearly to the knee. There was no doubt about that. The only other picture was a small card displaying a miraculous Madonna. She was crowned and had seven swords sticking into her heart. Gowns were no doubt concealed behind a second hanging curtain; a crucifix stood on a little table by itself: I think that was all. The whole establishment seemed to me scrupulously decent. I suppose it was very poor, but certainly I should never have noticed that had not Livia chosen that I should; and when she brought herself into the midst of it, we might have been in the Palazzo del Magnifico.

Tortoni, Tertulliano, having attained what, apparently, was to be a *coup* of magnitude, was now in a hurry to say his *Nunc Dimittis*. In fact, he was too ready, and in fact he said it too

soon. Badly in want of breath was he; he lifted and let fall his arms as if he were dandling a baby. Wits had left him as well as breath, and as for manners, what remained of them but some poor tattered instincts? "S'accommodi, s'accommodi," was all he had to say; and then, without showing me any accommodation at all, he threw up his hands like a man drowning. "Io non posso più!" I heard him wail, as he fled stumbling from the room. I heard him blunder downstairs: he had sought the sanctuary of the street. If one needed adventure by any chance—! I looked at the young queen by the window. One frail hand was on the sill, one slim finger just grated on it. I had nothing to say, and she intended to say nothing. What the deuce——! The comic edge of the crisis struck me, and I broke into innumerable laughter. She was very much puzzled; she frowned; but I suppose she saw that I was a human being and not a milch-cow. We very soon became friends; or if that is too great a word, reached that comfortable footing of intimacy where each is able, without effort, to get the best out of the other—as a free-will offering.

Livia, when you had got thus to know her, was an extremely innocent girl; I apply the word deliberately. Her self-possession was innocence.

She had character, knew what she wanted, and exactly how far she deserved to have it. She did not choose to make bargains with Providence on any but the greatest occasions of need; but she believed that if by some fortunate chance she got more than she deserved — why, that then she *had* deserved it. I have said that she was hot-tempered; she was, and proud too — as proud as a wound. She was proud of all sorts of things, but not of her beauty. This was, unhappily, too necessary a commodity of hers for any satisfaction to be in it. Certainly she was proud of being Sienese, though she always denied it. "What else could I be?" she used to say, which sounds arrogantly enough. But when I got to know her well, I found that her real pride lay deeper, and was the faster to hold because never sure of its ground. To fetch it up flame-hot there always needed to be some speck upon the object of it — just as you may make any girl blush by saying, There's a smut on your face. Livia's *contrada* was her darling pride, and upon that there were as many smuts as you chose to look for. She belonged, you must know, to Provenzano, to the *contrada della Giraffa*, a quarter of little fame, with a badge which had never brought luck. As a consequence, if you desired to see Livia at her fiercest, you either said of

The Lizzi. Siena.

some one that he was "andato a Provenzano" (which is our "gone to the devil"), or spoke of the Palio as the peculium of Oca or Tartuca — the Quarter of the Goose, or that of the Tortoise.

Now, I never saw the Palio run in her company, and that is how I found her out. She said that she didn't care to go, that it was too hot, that there were too many people; but she did go — there's the truth of it — she did go; and screamed *Giraffa!* with her neighbours, and with them had beleaguered her famous Madonna di Provenzano with petitions for weeks together. And when the race was over and the contrada of the Wave had won it, she sulked, and would not enter the church of her armless goddess. All this transparency flashing and flaunting under the eyes of a friend was too much for me; I roundly taxed her with it, and am glad now that I did. She saved one pride by means of another, in the prettiest way. For when I had cornered her, and got her to confess that her Giraffe never had won a palio, never entered, was not even required to enter in these days, she flew upon me with a vehemence beyond belief — asking what need, pray, had the Giraffe to struggle in a crowd of thieves and assassins, when everybody knew that the patroness of the whole stupid business

was the Madonna of Provenzano — whose banner graced and crowned the field, without whom not a hand could be raised, not a vote cast; before whom every *nerbo* must be laid for benediction, every knee be bent for strength to be given? "And would it be a tolerable thing, a thing of decency, do you suppose" — she startled me: it was magnificent to see her fluttering nostrils as her scorn fanned them — "would it be decency that the sons of the patroness themselves should compete in the thing?" It is, of course, quite true that the armless Madonna of Provenzano is the queen of the Giraffa, and Foundress, in some degree, of the Palio.

I said, the Provenzani *had* competed; she waved her hand. Shame had killed their base desires. Nothing now would bring them to offer themselves for the *prova*. "Shame — yes, and Fear."

She came close to me, hissing the words in my ear. "Fear, signore. I'll tell you why. It is reasonable in every man who competes for this thing, that he should desire to win it. Well, well then, do you not know that my people could bring home the Palio more times than Bellino ever did for his poor Tartuca?" Bellino was a famous rider, unbeaten, I believe. "More times!" cried Livia, appealing to the skies —

"they would win it for ever. They could win it on the Last Day, if there was time."

I asked, how could this be? She bunched her fingers together, and bound them closely with thumb and forefinger of the other hand. "*By*

HOUSE OF ST. CATHERINE.

hiding our Madonna of Provenzano. Then those others could do nothing — nothing at all. There is the truth." She rose up, majestic and inspired; she looked like a Herald Angel. The dialectic was superb — I could have kissed her foot.

When she had recovered her composure and was perfectly good-tempered, I got her to talk about her Madonna — which she would have done

by the hour together. What I gathered was this much: Once the Lady of Provenzano had had a son, a Gesù of her own. It was true he was dead; but she carried him on her knees and tended him with her hands, fanning the flies away — and she was happy, although she had hardly any worship. She lived on the outside of a house in the piazza: very few people had noticed that she was there, but she had her dead Gesù — that was company enough.

But some enemies of hers — Spaniards, Florentines, Volterrani, Livia didn't know who, and cared nothing — broke through the Camollia Gate and murdered a *branca di gente* (a horde of people), and settled down in Provenzano, and went out shooting whenever they chose. One of these *birbanti* — ruffians by profession, I think she meant — became acquainted with a *donna allegra* of that quarter, and used to visit her; and this *donna allegra* lived in the piazza, just opposite to the Madonna, who was in the open air then, and nursed her dead Gesù day and night, and was happy, as I had been told. Well, this *birbante* was one day at the house of his *amica* — that *donna allegra* she had been speaking of — and he was leaning out of the window — and I might be sure that his gun was handy. He was idle, had nothing to do; so presently his

eye falls upon our Madonna across the way. "Tut!" says the *birbante*. "See how she nurses that carrion. I'll soon put a stop to that," says he. Whereupon he ups with his gun, pulls, and *pam!* he shoots the dead Gesù all to shivers, and blows into fine powder the Madonna's tending hands. The neighbours run out of doors, or look out of windows. "Who would be dead of that shot?" they ask each other. They look up and down, round about, they see nothing extraordinary — only the smoke of the gun floating up to the chimneys. Va benissimo. They return to their affairs; so also the *birbante*.

But the *donna allegra*, who happened to be alone that evening, about the *prima di notte* was leaning out of her window — not looking for anybody; just looking out into the warm evening and thinking of little or nothing. She was of a happy nature, living from day to day as best she could or as she must; and now she was certainly very happy; but — *cosa strana!* her eyes were full of tears, which flowed and flowed. They ran down her cheeks to her arms on the window, and in little streams down to the ground; but she let them run freely, since they seemed to make her happy. And the more they flowed the happier she became. And then the miracle

occurred which I am about to tell you. Listen. There was this Giulia — that was the name of the *donna allegra* — crying softly to herself at the window; and presently, down in the street, she hears, as it were, an echo of her own sweet grief — more gentle crying, and a low sobbing of words of grief: "O lasso! O poverina, chè faro? O lasso! Oimè!" She listened for a little — her own tears not ceasing to fall — and then, as if she knew what she was going to do, she goes to her door and down the stair, and steps across the piazza, and stops in front of the house opposite to her own, and looks up, and says: "Buona pasqua, Madonna Santissima. Chè hai?"

"Oimè!" says the Madonna. "They have taken away my son."

"Eh," says La Giulia, "but you know that that had to be. He is gone to Paradise; and that is where your ladyship will find him."

"They shot him, Giulia," says the Madonna; "and my arms which held him — see, they are gone, too."

Giulia looked up through the dusk — and it was as I tell you. Her arms were shot clean away at the shoulders.

La Giulia cried out: "Oh, the assassins! Oh, the cut-throat dogs! Who has done this blasphemy?"

"It was your *caro amico*, Giulia," says the Madonna.

Giulia looked at the white Madonna and knew that she could not lie, even if she would. Then she ground her teeth together, and cursed the

SIENA.

birbante in a low voice. "Lo piglia un' accidente," she said — and it came true, as she learned the next day; for the *birbante* had his neck broken in a fight, being thrown out of an upper window. "But," says La Giulia, "if you have lost a son you have gained a daughter; and if your arms are gone, my heart has come back."

She made her reverence, and went about the

piazza from house to house, calling her neighbours and friends, women all, of her own profession. "Come all of you," she said; "come this moment. A miracle has happened. The Madonna is crying for her son: we must be her daughters. Come, and bring tapers." So all those women came out with lighted tapers and made a great ring round about the maimed Madonna, and joined hands, singing Laudi and the Litany of the Virgin; and kept all the hours, and never left off the rosary. And whomsoever passed by, whether man or woman, they compelled to kneel and say the *Ave Maria*, and lay down a quattrino in honour of their Madonna.

This nightly devotion went on for many weeks of the summer, until the Madonna, being comforted, was grateful, and her gratitude, taking the heavenly form, was noised all over the city. For she made many notable miracles among women, healing them when they were sick, turning their hearts, and the like. And soon there was enough treasure to build the fine church, which you can see any day you please in the Piazza di Provenzano; within which, when it was finished, she herself was carried upon the shoulders of lords and cardinals, under the eyes, as Livia believes, of the Holy Father. Upon that great festa a palio was run in her honour,

San Domenico: Siena.

and a man of the Giraffa won it, and presented it to her. And so, by degrees and degrees, nobody dared enter for the palio without seeking her benediction, or vowing her a heart, or whatsoever he could find that would please her. Livia here bent her brows at me. "This is why she is the greatest of all the Madonnas of Siena, and the Giraffa, which contains her, the greatest of all the *contrade*."

"And you love her, Livia?"

"Già," said Livia; "we all love her. But I shall love her more when I am older."

I objected. "Why so? You cannot be too young, I suppose, to love her."

"No," said Livia. "But it is more convenient to love her afterwards — and she quite understands."

I hope she did — in fact, I know she did, though Livia didn't think so. I remember that I ended the conversation by saying: "Livia, Livia, I am going to prophesy. I prophesy that there will be a miracle. But you must love the Madonna extremely."

Livia turned away her head. "Come," I said, rising. "Take me to see her now."

"I think I will not," she replied; but after a while she proposed it herself, as if she had suddenly thought of it.

The Madonna of Provenzano is in a niche, high over the altar of her somewhat gaudy temple. Every visitor to Siena must be familiar with her pinched white face and sunken eyes, her veil, her crown, her cuirassed, armless trunk. To see this magnificent young Livia kneel stiffly there, the picture of health and bodily perfection, and look steadily up at her woe-begone divinity, and gravely and familiarly talk to her, was to be assured of what I asserted before, of Livia's innocent mind. The Madonna di Provenzano, patroness of *donne allegre!* They all come to her in time. Upon this occasion the talk between mistress and servant was very grave. Livia was pale; she had shawled her head to enter the church, and now drew the lace close about her chin. Conversation, slow to begin, grew very earnest; Livia seemed to be arguing with the Madonna, rather hot for her own opinion, not willing to be convinced. A footfall sounded in the church, she looked round, she touched my shoulder. "See, see," she said. "Here is old Imperia; watch what she does." A very wizened, partly mad old woman with wandering grey hair came in upon her crutches, curtsied to the Madonna of Provenzano, and then, suddenly, changed her mind, or seemed to change it, and went out again. "We must follow her," said Livia. "Come."

And she took my arm. We went, very slowly (for Imperia had to drag one leg), up the hill to the

FONTE NUOVA, SIENA.

Servite Church. Imperia entered; we followed. She knelt close to a sepulchre where, behind an

iron *grille*, was a ghastly waxen image of the dead Christ: her face was transfigured, she was in an ecstasy. She kissed her old hand seven times to the Seven Wounds, and "Good day," she whispered — "Good day, my Lord Christ. I have seen Thy mother. She bids her love to Thee." I felt Livia tremble where she knelt near by me. When Imperia was gone, she hid her face for a while, and I saw her shoulders shake. But her eyes were calm and quite dry when she showed them again; she was exceedingly grave. "I have seen Imperia often in our church," she said, "but never here. Now I know what her duty is — and whose is this Cristo. This is a strange thing. Go away now. I wish to be alone."[1]

A change came over her from this hour, but I must delay to speak of it until I have remembered many things. She took me to visit the other Sienese Madonnas — her, for instance, of the Maestà, the Madonna delle Grazie, as she is called, done by Duccio, I believe — a solemn,

[1] It was after this — shortly — that I asked Livia to sing to me. She laughed and shook her head. I said that I had heard girls sing in the mountains, of their lovers: — "Ho colto un giglio," etc. Her eyes grew hard. She lowered the lids so that I should not see them. But I had seen them; they were like dark jade. "We do not sing of lovers in Provenzano," she said, low; "but we sing when we have to, and to those who demand it of us." "But if I demand it, Livia?" She shot a quick chill glance at me, then stiffened her neck. "You! you do not demand. No, no. I shall never sing to you." I didn't ask her any more for songs. But here is evidence of change for an astute reader.

stupid-looking goddess. Livia told me that she was sterile now, though she had many times saved Siena from enemies. But that was long ago, long before they moved her out of the Duomo. Since they had put her in the Opera no one came to do her service, and therefore she worked no miracles. I don't wonder at it. It is a thing which we may reflect upon, the number of barren deities there must be in the Accademia across the way. There they are, crowded together for tourists to gape at: but where were they once? Poor ladies, dry-boned and hard-eyed, who prays before them now, or gives them hearts or tapers? Who kisses them, or holds them out shaking hands? It is a thing which we may reflect upon at our leisure, that to make our holiday we have robbed God of His people and these people of their gods. Mr. Such-an-one and Professor That-other, measuring the metacarpus of a thin hand or two, will tell us immediately who made them, or who did not. Bah! I want to know whom they made — what young Livias, what old Imperias. It seems to me that you have more right to take a man's heart out of his body than his god out of his heart. The thieves we are! Let us think of the sterile Madonna in the Opera and what that may mean before we exalt the great Duccio at the expense of the great Cimabue.

But the Madonna "of the Great Eyes," in the Capella del Voto, is (if I may be pardoned a term from the orchard) in full bearing. She does not want for children. Her shrine is ablaze with tapers, stuck all over with hearts, chains, and badges. Both she and her Bimbo have rare crowns. Livia had to allow that she did wonders. So also did the Madonna del Manto, whom the laundresses of Fontegiusta serve, and so the famed Madonna of the Servites. But she "of the Snows," in a little church of her own, a sad-browed, pensive, pretty lady, does nothing. Livia thought little of her, although she could urge nothing to her discredit. "She is nothing — she is nothing at all," she kept drumming into my ears as we walked to the church; and she would not kneel to her when she got there. "Why, what can she do?" she cried, directly we were in the street again. "You see what she is. She has no curtain before her. She is *roba di galleria* — a thing for show." I said that she was a beauty. "Pooh," said Livia, — "what has beauty to do with the matter? It is the heart you want, and the kind eyes. She has neither — she is nothing. I never heard of a single thing that she did." And let our artists take this to mind, that there is no instance of a show Madonna having worked a miracle. The Madonnas of the Goldfinch, of the Grand

Duke, of the Garden; Del Sarto's blowzy wench

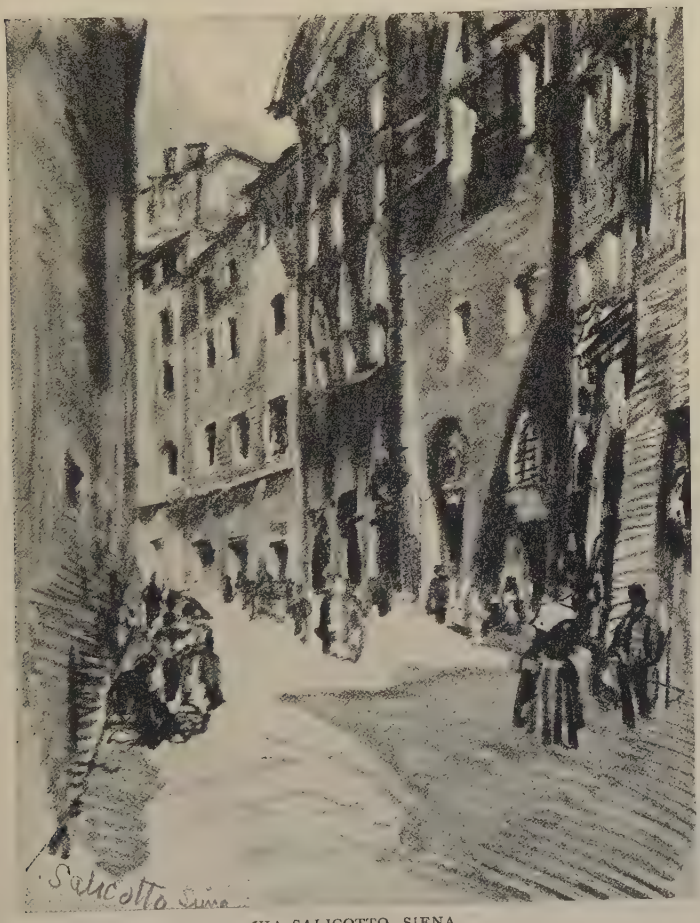
SAN DOMENICO, SIENA.

of the Sack, all the Botticelli, Lippo Lippi, Titian flower-beds — have they any gilt hearts? Not one.

But I must get nearer to Livia's private affair — that question whether or no she would allow herself to love her Madonna — which I very well knew was going on. I saw much less of her: that was one proof. When I did see her she was extremely silent: that was another. Then, on a day in May, she inducted me, much against her will, into the Glories of the Goose. It was the Vigil of Saint Catherine, who, of course, belonged to that quarter, and to whom Livia, like all the Sienese whomsoever, paid certain if grudging honour. An Ocaiola she certainly had been — this saintly lady — but also a Sanese; a great saint indeed who, had she been of the Giraffa, would have been a serious rival of the armless Madonna. But, secure in the possession of that Puissance, Livia could afford to be generous to Santa Caterina. Much of this I had to urge before she would accept my escort to San Domenico, that great rude church on the headland; and go she did; but it is worth while remarking, that she would not wear her festal gear. Neither straw hat, nor silk gown, nor filigree hairpins, nor necklace would she put upon herself. She chose to go in her every-day wear, hatless, in a print bodice and green stuff skirt, in white stockings, and cloth slippers which clattered at every step. This made her more than commonly

The Campo, Siena.

conspicuous, though (to be sure) there were few of the Ocaiole of figure so superb or carriage at



VIA SALICOTTO, SIENA.

once so easy and so strong. No doubt but she knew that. She was the observation of every-

body and the lure of not a few; yet I declare upon my heart and conscience that she went through her phases of curiosity, enthusiasm, and religious profit-seeking just for all the world as if there had been nobody in that thronging church but herself, Saint Catherine's head, and a *frate* or two. Now, properly digested, that is a very extraordinary thing, that a fine girl should be so unconscious, or so negligent, of admiration. Imagine a girl of our own people under such fire. Just imagine it!

I said that Livia showed, with all the rest, curiosity, enthusiasm, and religious profit-seeking. Not only were these the phenomena, but this was the order of their manifestation upon this vigil when, in San Domenico, they expose the relics of Saint Catherine, and honour them by a sermon and a procession of children. For, first, she was very curious to see the saint's head, which is exhibited to the faithful in a shrine of flowers and starry candles. She pushed for a place in front, she stood tiptoe, gazed with all her serious eyes at the little brown mummy. A woman's poor shrunken head, it seemed to me, crowned by some ghastly travesty of honour with a bridal wreath. The agony still tight upon the lips and blind eyes: this was what I could see, and soon tired of. But that adoring, praying, appealing,

straining crowd saw, or hoped to see, much more. They held up their arms, they nodded and wagged their own quick heads, they whispered to it fast and familiarly. Mothers held up their children, who crowed and cheered to see the bright lights. Fathers taught their boys how to cross themselves, and got them so much into the habit of it that I saw some afterwards wandering about the spaces of the church performing the signature incessantly, as if it had been a new game. Meanwhile our tall Livia devoured the relic with her eyes, neither praying to it, nor moving her arms towards it, nor holding out her devotion in her two hands.

"*E piccola*," she said, "she's a little thing to be espoused to Christ — *ma pure bellina*, but she's rather pretty all the same," which I should never have called her. She had used the same phrase of her own trim waist, the reader may remember; and one admission was as sincere as the other. Enthusiasm had not come upon her yet. Although she knelt and moved her lips, Livia was not praying. I had seen her talk secrets with the Madonna of Provenzano, and I knew she was not praying now.

It was the procession which called up her emotion — a procession which followed a car decked with paper roses and bearing a monstrance of

silver. In that there was a brown finger of the poor dead. A straggling, straying procession it was, of children with tapers and guild-brethren with torches, which fought a way for itself round the church to the music of a fitful chant. Worse singing I have seldom heard, nor have I ever seen more imminent conjunction of candle-flames and muslin veils. The monotony of the chant also beggars description: it was a single phrase repeated for ever and ever; and yet I saw Livia's nostrils flutter in the quick draught of her breath, and her bosom stirring like a short sea. As the singers came near her, she began to thrill a little; but they passed by a dumb Livia; and then came the young men, roaring like bulls in a market. It was then that she too began to sing, like one inspired, full-throated as a nightingale, from whom her notes well like honey from a jug. Now indeed the girl was on fire; and the thought jumped high within me that there were the makings of a saint in this girl of Provenzano. I did not then know how soon the armless Madonna intended to enfold her, nor in what guise.

To this noble rage of praise succeeded self-seeking in my friend, a frank desire to get for herself what she could out of her exaltation: a thing really not shocking at all, but part of the

strange affair which religion is. To Livia's mind

VICOLO AL VENTO, SIENA.

there is a bargain to be made in church just as anywhere else, to the striking of which will go —

what goes in the market-place — finesse, confidence, ready-mindedness, shrewdness; in fact, all the qualities which make a good chafferer outmatch a bad one. Enthusiasm for the business is also material. Whoever heard of a man prospering at his trade who did not think it better to be a good boat-builder or market-gardener than to command armies in the field or build St. Peter's of Rome? So your church-chafferer will sing "*O Crux, Spes Unica*," with the best, and expect to be rewarded with the best. So Livia, having shrilled her lauds of St. Catherine, took her place in the file, that she might pass before the relic, speak to it — and be heard.

She formed one of what seemed an endless chain, and her demeanour differed from none of her companions'. There were no more lauds, no more prayers. No, but everybody had his petition ready, and everybody made it, kneeling as he passed by the head, and kissing it in, as you may say, when he had lodged it. I saw Livia kneel and speak her torrential whispers — what a flood of passion in them! I saw her stoop and kiss the shrine — and her look at the relic, *Now, it is a bargain, mind.* The moment she was past and in the church again she was her usual recollected, beautiful self. It was all over.

Next day was the festa, with great doings in the street; but she would not go to San Domenico again. She went to mass at Provenzano, and afterwards saw with me the street procession up the Via Fontebranda, and the flagging of certain favoured Ocaioli by the *alfieri* of the quarter. I shall not insist upon this spectacle, except to say that, to Livia, it had no religious significance at all, although the mummers were in sacred guise, and the centre of all was a silver statue of St. Catherine. The mystery was her marriage to our Saviour, the persons all enacted by children. She hardly looked at them. The hymn which had so stirred her before left her dumb; the children were now brats; the whirling flags, the jaunty, lithe young man in striped hose and green and yellow doublet, who manipulated them was a "slug of Fontebranda" — and why? Because every house in the street bore a jutting goose over its door; because the flags were red, white, and green, and the banner bore in its midst a crowned goose; because, in fact, all this was the Glory of the Goose. St. Catherine was become an Ocaiola again, and Livia could not bear it. As soon as the procession had passed she begged me to excuse her. It was not convenient for her to remain any longer; she had only come because I had asked her. She hoped

I would stay, if such things amused me. We should meet again, no doubt. I said that I hoped so, and she disappeared. I may as well say at once that I did not see her again for many a year.

At the end of the procession I was much astounded to find the gallant young flag-waver standing before me. His glories of green and yellow, his stripes, his curls, his little red cap, made it a public ceremony: but everything is done publicly in Tuscany. He bowed and saluted. "A thousand excuses, sir," he said, "but that girl who was with you ——"

"Yes?"

"Sir, she is my *amica*."

Now I had never known that before; but — poor Livia — why not?

"Sir," continued the *alfiere*, "I have lately made her highly honourable proposals — namely, of marriage. But last evening, sir, she refused them. Now, sir ——"

"Sir, in my turn," I said, "I can assure you ——" He put up his hand.

"Nothing more, I beg you, sir," he said. "I know exactly what you would be pleased to say, and can only assure you that no such words are necessary. But I must inform you further that Livia refused me, nevertheless, on your account."

Siena.

I was greatly surprised. He assured me, however, that Livia's belief was that I and the Madonna of Provenzano between us desired her

A STREET IN SIENA.

to be a nun. Thereupon I told him what I did most ardently desire for her — which was to marry himself or any other honest man. I believe I convinced him by the most obvious means: at any rate, we finished the evening together at

the Caffè Greco, and he left me full of hope and promise. I was not so hopeful as he was, for my firm conviction then was that she had refused him because he was an Ocaiolo.

I did not see my friend again for six years: it was last May that we met. She was looking extremely handsome and sedate, and told me that she had four children and that her husband was a fool. He certainly showed no folly in marrying Livia; and she, I may in any case remark, seems of apostolic mind in suffering him gladly. One question which I asked her was answered by another from her.

"Will you tell me, Livia," was my question, "whether, when you were married, you gave a good gilt heart to Madonna di Provenzano?"

Livia looked me full in the face, without a flush or quiver.

"Why should I?" was her question.

CHAPTER XI

VAL D'ARBIA: BUONCONVENTO — MONTE OLIVETO — SAN QUIRICO — PIENZA

SIENA, like a rustic beauty, too shy to pursue and yet unwilling to be left, follows the traveller for nearly twenty miles of his southerly road, with long looks and enchanting glances of her blushing face. As everything about this place is lovely you will accept without surprise the winding road to the gate, a road hemmed deeply in lemon and white, laburnums and acacias in flower, the colour of a mass-priest's vestment. The huge double gate — port and antiport — which closes in this fragrant alley, bears upon its outward face a tall sheet of fresco of Sano di Pietro's, which you can see for a quarter of a mile of your course, one of those gracious offshoots of the Catholic religion which all men must admire: the proper pride of it, the loyalty and dead-certainty, which make sure that the incomer will rejoice in its gods, and that its gods

Afterthoughts of Siena.

shall be the beginning and the end of his sojourn. Here you have a stooping Virgin, in her blue mantle and robe of cream brocade, a courtly, fair King Christ leaning forward to crown her: noble belief, nobler witness! And while you watch this solemnity Siena herself rises above it, rose-colour and purple, crowned with ivory and grey; and you see the Mangia tower, like the lance of an outlying vedette, keeping guard, as well it may, over the road. For you are now upon the high-way to Rome. Across this broken plain marched the Orvietani, and robber-lords from Grosseto, Pietra, Corneto, as often as the Papal battalions. Those far dim hills — Monte Amiata, Monte Labbro, Monte Civitella, and the rest of them — have all held enemies. Siena disputed this country with her neighbours. The end of her high pretences and their deep claims you know by now.

The South.

From the embanked road, which at first you follow, you will see, left of your way, the naked lists of Montaperto, whose mounds and dykes of mud, whose tortured pale hills, still writhing under the fierce volcanic stress, are a foretaste of what is to confront you for many a league — a rolling grey plain edged at the extreme distance by violet hills; stone pines upon lonely eminences; cypresses in rows,

Porta Romana, Siena.

leading to chapel or farmhouse; empty pastures; here and there a slow shepherd with his flock straying dejectedly behind him —

> A uno, a due, a tre; e l' altre stanno
> Timidette atterrando l' occhio e 'l muso —

man and beasts all of the drab of the soil. A

S. QUIRICO, MONTE AMIATA.

great horizon, a sea of grey land, patched like the sea with the shadow of a cloud or chance gleam of light; here a blot of crimson clover, there a field of peas in flower: far off, but winding nearer, a cloud of dust. A streak of dusty road, like some ship's wake, leads you on: over all

is a white, unquenchable sky. You are going south, and everything above or about you assures you of it — to the land where men, trees, beasts and their abodes are prone to the mid-day sun. All this you may see as from a platform, as slowly your road drops down to mulberry-trees and the plain. Hereabouts you reach Isola, a village of whitewashed tenements, with never a glass window to the whole, and a *trecento* church the shape of a barn. A line of poplars testifies to the Tressa brook, which soon joins the Arbia; and at Ponte a Tressa, a long pink village with two stone pines to give it character, and a golden maze of vineyards beyond it, the two rivers touch and mingle, and take you to Buonconvento and beyond. You pass Monterone d' Arbia, a prosperous town where the hospital of La Scala, in the old days, had a mill, and built a tower to guard it. The tower still stands — a glum fortress over a brook, and served Marignano in 1554 as a base of his operations against Siena. Not far on is Lucignano, a beautiful place on a cypress-wooded mount, a turretted, battlemented little rock of offence. Largely populated now by donkeys, which they breed and export,[1] it possesses a green hill-side, a weeping-willow, and a fountain of spring-water, by which

Comfort at Lucignano.

[1] You may see herds of them at pasture, like sheep, in the fields.

you may sit to eat your breakfast, and see far north of you Siena, like a crimson cloud-cap to her ridge. The spring comes out of the rock on which Lucignano stands, the fountain is recessed in a cave, by no means without art. It is figured as a bountiful woman standing there. Moss clothes

MONTAPERTO, SIENA.

her to the middle, and the water gushes out of her breasts. It was pretty to see the hedgers and vine-tenders come up to drink — children at the bosom of their mother. For here is a Pan-Italian picture, if you please: earth moulded in the shape of every man's mother, and men, like children, running to her for solace in the

day's round. Italy, by no means unaware of the aspect of the things she makes, will show you many emblems like this of retired Lucignano; and so will other countries I daresay. The figure of man or woman squirting water — if you must reduce it to that — is pretty common and mostly disagreeable. In Italy only, this pathetic fancy, this glimpse of the mortal things which stir the mind, tinges the poor images with an artless grace which makes them real. Art or religion, which are these parables? Heaven knows there is mighty little difference in this country. You will see fountains like this in the great cities: in Brussels you will see one, which is considered much more remarkable, bragging of its impudence in the street. But in what village of what other country will you find it hidden away in a cave upon the bare hill-side, to be of service only to the thirsty vine-dressers, who use it every day? In none alive at this hour, I dare affirm: but once before, in Greece, you would have found it.

With Lucignano the hills begin; from it you will follow a valley road. You pass Seravalle, a famous Sienese outpost, block of a fortress, without form and void; you pass Ponte d' Arbia; and then you reach Buonconvento, a brave, square, and walled town, banked

Buonconvento.

above the Ombrone, with a river-side piazza of planes and chestnuts, a complete circuit of walls,

IN THE CHURCH, MONTE OLIVETO.

and a belfry with a graceful tall cupola rising above them.

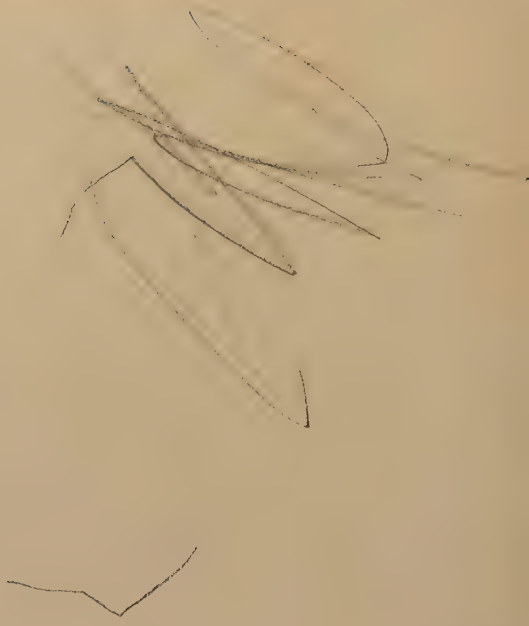
Here that most unhappy Cæsar, Henry of Luxemburgh, who was to do every wonderful thing desired by Dante, and did not one — that

> Alto Arrigo, ch' a drizzare Italia
> Verra in prima ch' ella sia disposta,

came in 1313 to die, and did that suddenly[1] and thoroughly, while the Sienese were manning their walls against him and the Florentines just quitting theirs. There were, and there are still, medicinal waters near by in which a man might wash and be made whole; but nothing, it seems, could keep this one's bones from rotting. Extraordinarily futile prophecy of Dante's! But it is the fate of poets to personify functions, and judge a man as great as his profession. Into the Cæsarean office Dante read all the forces of Julius and Augustus, which made that office potent. Very soon after he had penned it the sad-browed Florentine must have known it vain; and not so long after that again he was to know whether the sequel had been any more true. You may remember it: how Beatrice, being with her lover in the very Rose of heaven, in the very burning centre of that Rose, drew him

[1] So suddenly, that rumour fixed his death in poison, administered (*aisait-on*) by a Dominican in the sacrament. There is no truth in the surmise, but much probability. The rumour itself is evidence of that. The curious may see his effigy in the Pisan Campo Santo — that of a tall man with a heavy bovine face.

The Church Monte Oliveto.



towards her with her look of one who would speak and is silent —

> Qual' è colui che tace e dicer vuole,

and showed him a seat empty in the convent of White Stoles. In that high seat, said she —

> In quel gran seggio a che tu gli occhi tieni
> Per la corona che già v' è su porta,
> Prima che tu a queste nozzi ceni,
> Sederà l' alma, che fia giù angosta,
> Dell' alto Arrigo . . .

If great Henry sat so high, it was that the lowly might be exalted. But it avails little to wonder what Dante said, and what missed, in that world whither he must fare twice.

This I will add of Buonconvento, that it has a good kitchen and a friendly inn, and this yet again, that if you wish to see Tolomei's Abbey — a notable outcrop of Siena — it is here that you will turn off the Via Romana for a climb of seven miles along a finely contoured road, not yet ten years old.

Chiusure, a little red village, stands upon a hill of some 3000 feet above the sea; Monte Oliveto Maggiore is on a spur a little below it, only to be reached by descending and ascending a mile of woody glen. To make the ascent you climb round two gorges, deep romantic valleys whose shelves and pinnacles are

The climb to Oliveto.

browsed by goats (while the herdboys and girls flit in and out of the thickets, fauns and Oreads upon their everlasting business); and so by painful degrees you make the convent. For such a site — high in the clouds and winds, lifting out of an oak forest — the place looks red and raw as you come near it. It is, in fact, uncompromisingly ugly, without ivy, or lichen, or moss, or any of the funguses which make gardens of our old roofs. The church tower has a Lombard look in its sharp casing of red brick; it is square and has the conical Lombard cap. The gateway is like the entry of a castle, turretted, crenellated, and double-doored. You receive a jar hereabouts, a jerk to your tenderer feelings from which you hardly recover, though Virgin and Child welcome you in, and San Benedetto (on the convent side) sends you forward with a blessing. The gate is at the summit of the rock; a gorge glooms on three sides out of four; you must go down a long avenue of ilex to the edge of the fourth gorge upon the very brink of which the convent hangs. There you find it, a great, bare, draughty house, outside all red and inside all white; naked as a bride and clean to distraction. You will have a simple reception, plain food and a cold bed. Almost certainty you will experience a tearing night-wind, rattling windows, slamming doors,

calling of owls and night hawks, a morning of tempest — beating rain, clouds blotting up Monte

THE COUNTRY AT MONTE OLIVETO.

Amiata and all the hill towns. Here at least is my recollection of Monte Oliveto Maggiore,

which the blessed Bernardo Tolomei founded in 1313, and which a Sodoma painted, but did not adorn.

The convent.

They have stripped the place nearly bare of the many fine things it no doubt contained. Among others, the library is but a shell, the pharmacy a wreck. The over-vaunted frescoes are in part effective, in a swagger they have and a bright air of audacity, as if they wondered that they were there and were vowed to carry it off. Where this is so, they are by Signorelli and his friends. The rest are set down to Sodoma, but if some of them are not by Pintorricchio, they are inane enough, trite and feeble enough, insincere enough to be his. The border line between simplicity and simper is an extremely narrow one. The Florentines never stepped over it; for the moment they had grown out of the nursery they became absorbed in other pursuits. They became curious, as with Pollajuolo; or pretentious, as with Fra Bartolommeo; or meretricious, as with Andrea del Sarto; but they never regretted the nursery and the fairy tales, and never tried to think themselves back in that sweet and sunny place. The Sienese were saved by their limitations: when they ceased to find their joy in patterns they ceased art altogether. It was otherwise with the Um-

brians. That Perugino was too old for the nursery is manifest in his portraits; but he had the force of passion behind his fancy to put him there again. His great pieces remain primitive to the very last. Pintorricchio, with no fancy at

S. QUIRICO.

all, copied the nursery work of his predecessors with a deadly precision which spreads death to the beholder. The absence of vital fancy makes all his things false. They are frozen — as in the library of the Sienese cathedral — or they simper as here. The rest are undoubtedly Sodoma's — boys, baggages, and spiritual erotics. I take leave to say of this whole cloisterful of frescoes that it is

nearly worthless. It is a report of the life of Saint Benedict by chroniclers who neither knew nor had considered of the great Norcian;[1] it consists of transcripts of every-day life in the *Quattrocentro* made by hacks who were either too frivolous or too dull to delight in it. As illustration, if I am right, they fail altogether; as decoration, it is a matter of taste; but to me they have neither the goldsmithery of Siena nor the vivacity and distinction of Florence. Drab-coloured, flabby inanity they appear to me. They do contain, some of them, evidence of Sodoma's preoccupations; one of them gives you his portrait, that of a narrow-eyed, scowling, red-lipped temple of evil humours, ministered unto by badgers and languishing young Ganymedes. One may leave them.

Out of that severe test of adversity which is the ordeal by fire of all systems, the Roman Catholic religion has never failed to come — the better. That being the fact, and the man having been what he was, it is unnecessary to say that the fragrance of the life and conversation of the

[1] Mr. Edmund Gardner, an instructed and amiable writer, upon whose learning I put my trust, in a recent book upon Siena, makes the best of these miserable things. He recounts all the miracles which they do their best to make absurd, and exclaims that he would like more of them if there were a Signorelli or a Sodoma to paint them. I will pass Signorelli; but as to the Sodomesque miracles I shall ask him to remember Gozzoli's in the Campo Santo of Pisa when he revises this fervent page.

Abbate di Negro is still fresh about these empty halls; and it is only proper to add, that in the present head of the house he has, in every respect, his best successor — an accomplished, courtly, humorous gentleman, a Settignanese and a Christian. He told me — what was very evident

CHURCH, S. QUIRICO.

— that the Government had laid hands on everything but the church and its actual site. The monks are left there on the understanding that they are to be innkeepers to travellers. They have been deprived of the means, they are estopped of all but the desire of doing good to the peasantry scattered — like dropt acorns — about

these uncouth bare valleys. Politically, this is inevitable; socially, unfortunate; charitably speaking, it is monstrous. One hoped better things for him and his flock, and said one's "Speriamo!" And, "Eh!" said he, "speriamo sempre!" and looked up out of the window with twinkling, patient eyes. I repeat, a brave gentleman, a Settignanese, and a Christian.[1]

San Quirico.

San Quirico d' Orcia owns a magnificent approach, a square, grey tower, and a Lombardesque church, which for dignity, curious beauty, and venerable aspect should be hard to match. Once the place was called San Quirico in Osenna; I never could learn why; but it has a fine sound of angelic heights which befits the austere sanctuary on a hill-top that it is. It prospers, and has an English air; staunch stone houses line the streets, clean, well-to-do, and middle-class; a busy market, drovers in gigs; a commodious inn with flowers in its balconies, where one lives wondrous well; a mansion for a squire, and, truly, a park, with park-gates opening upon the market-place. The

[1] What are you to do? The convent pharmacy is destroyed, lest with drugs for the body should be instilled drugs in the mind. No doubt, the Olivetans would work against the ruling order: so long as a nation has a "National Church" which is by no means national, that must occur. There is but one remedy. If the nation will not go to Church, the Church must go to the nation. Humankind no longer believes that Almighty God can be shut up within four walls.

house is a palace of the Chigi, who were marquesses of San Quirico; one Cardinal Flavio laid out the park. It has overgrown his designs, spilled itself over the pale, and is now a soft wilderness of moss-grown glades, dense ilex-woods, grass run riot, a tangle of orchids and wild gladiolus. Save for some maimed statues of Pan and old Sylvanus, half-dressed in lichen and fern, the birds have it all to themselves. Prosperous, wholesome, windy little town, full of friendly people, weatherwise, and honest — you will leave it with regret.[1]

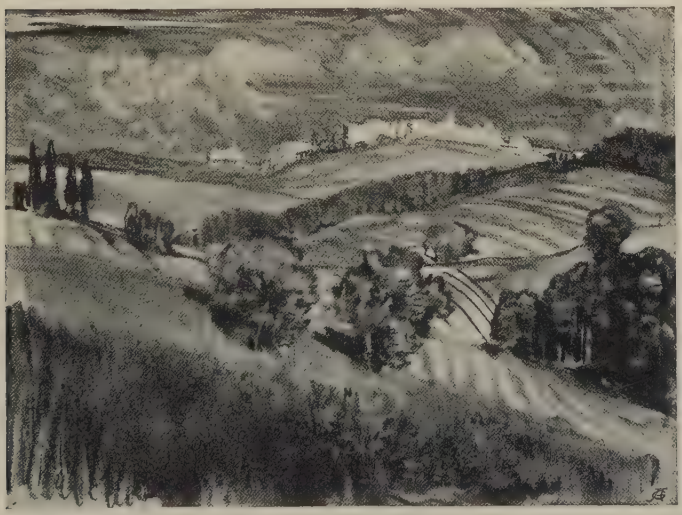
[1] The story of San Quirico (which I put discreetly here, that my impression may remain for what it is worth) is that of any one of these little hill-towns; but it so happens that an illustration is at hand. Some few miles along the road, between Pienza and Montepulciano, you may see an example of the thing, frozen in the doing, as it were. There is a Piccolomini castle there, — a stupendous, red, embattled keep with lower buildings about it, — a little church, a line of huts near by. Here, then, is the nucleus of your hill-town. Some Teuton robber descended into Italy with his lord, — were he Pepin or another, — marked this eminence, and the valleys it commanded, with his eye. He built himself this tower, took a fief of the empire, and held up his sword to Cæsar's name once a year. For his people he bought or stole women to be their wives and servants; Italians they. He built them huts close to his tower; he built them a church; this brought in the priest. There were raids, forays, they lived on plunder. But in that way lived every tenant of every rock in Tuscany; so our man must build a wall. He might build a dozen: within that wall was built-in the seed of discord; within was to be enacted the story which you will have had written large in every chapter of this volume; for, observe, he had built in the priest and his God-in-four-walls. The tenantry were the commune; the chief looked to Cæsar; the priest touched hands with Rome. Between these three the strife was to be until Cæsar or Peter prevailed. Then it was the turn of another to enter and take seisin. If the lord were wise he made terms with a

Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, the great Sienese Pope Pius II., thought to glorify himself and his house by rebuilding his native place. Corsignano was the village where he saw the light; there he built a street of palaces, a cathedral church, a piazza, a municipio; consecrated a bishop, imported with enormous pomp certain bones of Saint Andrew the apostle, and called the whole Pienza. Vain hope! For what purpose all this waste? As well could you make your brat a man by giving him a razor. You can no more make a city by building palaces than establish a church with apostles' bones. Pienza remains a country village; you can walk through it in ten minutes. But it has a street of great Florentine houses — spacious, ornate, stepped, broad-based and amply-corniced, in Rossellino's

The city of vanity.

greater lord. Cæsar was far off, but Cæsar's vicar would protect him. If the priest were wise, the Pope put the little burgh under his garment. According as the commune inclined to one or another would be the opportunity of Guelf city or Ghibelline, of Florence or of Siena. In the case of San Quirico, it passed from the Emperor Frederick into Siena's keeping, and was not lost by her until she lost all. Charles V., descending on Siena, took this place on his way, and quartered his cavalry here. After that its story is as you know it. The Medici made it a marquessate for Cardinal Chigi, whose square house and weedy park are there to this day, and a vane on the church tower, pierced with the hills and cross. I should add that the collegiate church is magnificent — sane, strong, idiomatic, racy building, with two fine doors — one of angels, and the other of knotty columns standing on lions' backs. It has a jewel of a picture by Matteo of Siena, a golden-vested Madonna in a black cloak, and four attendant saints all intent upon the mystery they are serving.

best manner. It has all the apparatus of a city: a bishop's palace, a canonica, a pretorio, a communal tower, a piazza; and its people live in the little straight tenements their great-grandfathers were born in, and eat bread and garlic on the cathedral steps.



MONTEPULCIANO.

Whether it be that the vanity of the attempt is too open, or that the style of building is not sympathetic, it is certain that the effect of Pienza is not one to deceive the beholder. Great town houses need a great town; great churches need great assemblies; cities must not lack for citizens. I heard high mass at Pienza very stately done, with

reverence, care, and even circumstance. I am sure that at the elevation the apostle's old bones may have stirred; but the congregation made no sign. Three old hedgers, their bills and sickles on the marble beside them, knelt mumbling under the dome; three girls with handkerchiefed heads were whispering in the nave. But there were canons in the choir; organ music pealed from the loft, and a bishop performed the rite. Thus honour was done to Pio Secondo and Saint Andrew's bones. It is a handsome church of the classical, spacious, insipid, late quattrocento style; too correct to be individual; in shape a Latin cross, with clustered shafts of grey stone to form nave and aisles, it has grey walls with narrow bands of black marble let in, and a vaulted roof of blue speckled with stars. You will see three fine pictures in it, all Sienese — one of Benvenuto di Giovanni's, one of Matteo's, weak for him, and a graceful Virgin in a dark cloak by Sano di Pietro.

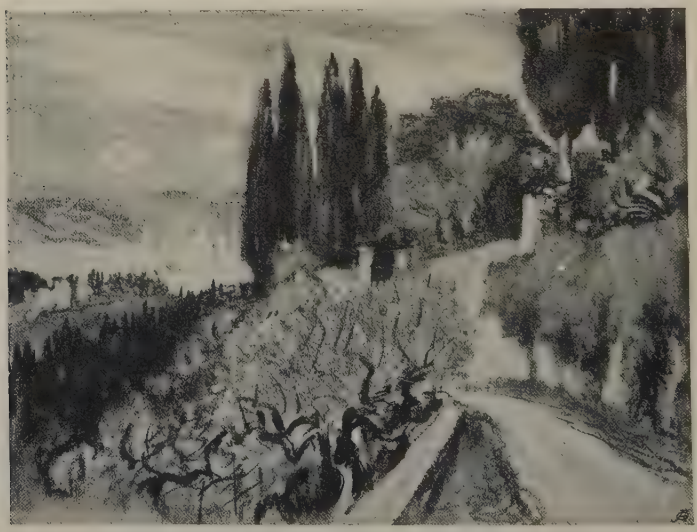
All the same, the church like the town lacks character, as the contrivers of both mostly did. Whatever the Renaissance may or may not have been, a birth and a begetting, or a sleep and a forgetting, by Rossellino's day it was an age of rules. Passion went into those, personality was crushed that they might be kept. *Surtout point de formules* is an injunction which must always

be repeated, so prone are we to dig ruts for our wheels. A roomy place, this church served the

PALAZZO PUBLICO, PIENZA.

French cavalry as stabling for their horses in 1555. Three times between the death of Pius

and that of Siena the little town was sacked. At last the Medici balls disputed pride of place with the crescents of Piccolomini, the palaces emptied, the canons sang offices to themselves, their old bones, the wind, and the bats; and Pienza became what it now is, a city without citizens. It has a graceful pointed belfry, as you will not fail to notice when you leave it — a white stone affair, very like a Gothic spire seen across broad English meadows, half hidden in a clump of English elms. I do remember one near Malvern which might be its fellow.



AT THE VILLA BACCHLIN.

CHAPTER XII

MONTEPULCIANO

To reach this town, continuing the travel of the last chapter, you have still to go some three leagues of difficult country by a road inextricably involved in woods of young oak. It is well worth the pains. You rise by one wide circle after another to your reward: once out of the woods the views are superb, both behind and before. Pienza is behind; I saw it all purple, darkling through an inky cloud, with a vivid white steeple striking up out of the heart of a storm. Behind that again, above the turmoil which afflicted it, was San Quirico, set very high; and ridged over San Quirico itself, Montalcino, like a city in the skies. In front, where the air showed coldly pure, I saw, on a sudden hill, Montepulciano, heaped into a pyramid, pearl-grey and red, with two towers predominant, and a warm side open to the sun — a curtain of brick which, joining the cliff,

Broad views.

seemed to run sheer down into liquid blue — the depths of the Val di Chiana. At least so it appeared to me. Mr. Pennell's picture gives a poet's vision of this eyrie, which, if it is not so rock-bound as Orvieto, is longer to reach. Behind the mount on which it stands you have the vast violet spaces of the plain, with a sun-steeped foreground such as Claude alone had scope for. In it are three lakes — Montepulciano and Chiusi, little silver sheets; and beyond them, like a strip of green gauze under the purple hills, which hide Perugia and keep Cortona in shadow, Trasimeno, fatal name. All its secrets lapt in reeds, there is Trasimeno asleep in the light, with a high rock jutting into it, and on that rock a castle, Castiglione del Lago, which the reader will discover is not so romantic as it looks.

Humours of an inn.

Montepulciano, though it never look romantic, never loses its barbaric nakedness, get you as near as you will. Its only inn is called the Marzocco, in memory of Florentine occupation; and as if it were not enough to climb six miles of hill to reach the town, you must add at least two flights of stairs to reach the inn. I believe the lower floors were concerned with corn-chandlery, and afforded reasonable entertainment for rats. What is perhaps worse is that when you do get there,

you are regarded by the undertakers with indifference if not with aversion. No smiling maids came out to coquette with cloaks and hand-baggage, no *facchino* strained at trunks, no deferential *padrone* nor far-seeing *padrona* knew my necessities before I asked. I re-

MONTEPULCIANO.

member loitering in an ante-room with last month's *Tribuna Illustrata* until, with a sudden access of rage, I got up and pulled the bell-rope out of its socket. And then a fluttered virgin appeared and said that she would see the *cameriere*. It was some time before I could accustom myself to such chilly treatment, but I

got to understand it. It was that the *cameriere* was very well as he was, assiduously, nay, affectionately served by all the maids in the house. The casual guest was thus in the position of members of a learned club, who are discouraged from exercising hospitality because it keeps the waiters up late.

The cameriere.

He is, or was, this pasha of a waiter, a tall, florid man, inclined to *embonpoint*. He had cold blue eyes and a fair moustache, of which he was exceedingly tender. His manners were fine, but wanting cordiality, his movements sedate. He was an indifferent bad waiter, but I should fancy a good housewife. Whatever a matron's hand could find to do he did with all his might. I remember that he showed me my bedroom, and how he looked to see if there was lavender in the drawers. Coming downstairs, I saw him at the linen-cupboard giving out sheets and pillow-cases. He never wore anything but carpet slippers, and was fond of his dressing-gown in the mornings. In these — I mean in the slippers — he waited upon me at dinner, for it is true that he condescended so far; but I observed that the maids waited upon *him* hand and foot, and that is more than he ever did to me. In the process of the meal, indeed, I discovered his foible, which was for the im-

peccability of his *harem*. I say that they waited upon him hand and foot; the despot himself did not think so. He was horribly sensitive to the least fleck upon his self-esteem: if there were not two wenches holding plates or a sauce-boat at the door, and another in the room attendant upon the wag of his head, he couldn't bear it. As in the farmyard you may see great chanticleer surrounded by his zenana, if any one of the bevy chance to stray, how he chuckles and fills his burnished neck; and when she returns to the fold, how swoops he down, curvetting about her with trailing wing. So alert was my soft-shod monarch of the *Marzocco*, so tender of his prerogative. If Bettina played truant, it booted not that Nanetta and Maria were beside him, nor could they appease him by beseeching looks. He would ring for Bettina; he would go to the buttery door and bawl for her. He ceased not to bawl until one of the others, terrified, ran to fetch her up. How he scolded her; how he scowled, tossed up his hands! It took long to pacify him, longer for me to dine. But it was rare to see him presently, in the midst of his now docile brood, grouting for them, so to speak, among the crockery, and when they were all busy picking about him, raising his great blonde head and looking sideways with an angry eye for any hint

of disrespect from anywhere. He "did himself," as they say, "uncommonly well"; and between breakfast and dinner smoked his *Virginia* in the dining-room, and read the news.

It had rained during my arrival, but cleared whilst I was settling in. When I walked abroad it was into the gathering dusk, with a keen lemon light in the western sky, and a flurry of vaporous cloud drawing off it. The cobble-stones were gleaming still with wet as I mounted a steep street — the town properly consists of but two — towards the citadel. There are fine palace fronts in Montepulciano, all upon the slope; and what is finest about them is the way their broad steps are set into ground which is some four feet higher on one side than it is on the other. Better masonry, more nicely worked off, I have never seen. But if I was between the houses, so (by Hercules) was the wind — bitter-cold, gusty, and strong. The whole place seemed in a scurry to get done with its immediate concern. One saw in terraced openings (giving on to the cliff) bending women with their skirts flying out, battling at their business. Men went muffled to the ears in fox-skin; boys blew on their fingers and trotted after us. Every one was active, on the jog; the *caffè* doors were not generously open, the wine-shops shut-to theirs

First thoughts.

with a snap as the topers pushed in or came huddling out. Your glimpses of the far-off country were of purple-black hills; gloom lay in the valley, here and there showed a house, pale as a ghost. A dust of snow came scudding over the way. You saw the far-stretching vista of the

MONTEPULCIANO.

hill-street peppered in whirling white. And this was May! And this was Italy! Stern, stern is the spring in Montepulciano; but I gather from what I have seen since that the summer is yet more fierce.

And yet, out of the chance vantages of their crags, they grow, or did grow, a fine red wine,

which Redi calls the king of all the Tuscan vast. They are said to have been famous for it from the 9th century, and Mr. Addington Symonds liked it: my bottle, perhaps, was of a poor year. Assuredly, if Bacchus in Tuscany requires to blink unhindered at the sun, this is the place for him; for of late I have seen the whole bare rock quivering under canicular heat — cliffs, houses, roofs, and steeples all pale and hot as metal. You know all extremes of weather when you are so close to the sky.

History.

The R. P. Leandro Alberti, a learned Dominican, reports that when he was at Montepulciano, in the church of his order, in 1588, he was shown the body of a co-religionist, the Blessed Agnes da Gracchiano, which, whenever trouble or danger menaced the city, did vehemently sweat. *Certamente*, as he adds, *cosa grande e rara;* certainly a great and rare performance. Upon which portent my only comment must be that the skin of the sacred relic must have been in constant action, for the disastrous tale of Montepulciano is singular among Tuscan cities. Boasting itself founded by that *lars*, Porsenna of Chiusi, whom Macaulay has embalmed for his schoolboys, it was early a bone of contention between Florence and Siena: Siena's for forty years before 1154, then

Florence's until 1202. Then, as fortune veered, the poor place was pitched from one to another. Montaperto gave it to Siena, Benevento returned it to Florence. The sympathies of the commune, be it said, were always Florentine, and the public buildings have an air of that city; but such things counted for little in the game of politics. In 1294 the two rivals seem to have agreed to share our town: they had a Bandinelli of Siena for Podestà, a Florentine, Gianfigliazzi, for captain. Meantime a home family, Del Pecora, began to rise towards a tyranny. Matteo Villani has much to say of them. There was Corrado del Pecora at the root, then a Guglielmo, then a Ranieri, who came to be Bishop of Chiusi, a position of advantage for tyrants. The example of the Duke of Athens, that fine figure of a man, inspired them to commence despots. Bertoldo Novello — young Bertoldo, son of old Bertoldo del Pecora — shot a shrewd bolt to that end when he married a Fiesca Malaspina and begat James and Nicholas. These two scoundrels, rivals in the beginning, intrigued with neighbour states, one with Perugia, the other with Siena, with the result that first Perugia made a slave of the place, and next Siena. They betrayed their fellow-countrymen, they betrayed and re-betrayed each other. Once

James got in with a band by night, and terrorised for two days by means of Greek fire and barricades; then Nicholas called up the Sienese, his friends, and thought to have James in a trap. James escaped by setting Montepulciano on fire, beginning with his own palace. There came, however, a day when, by Florentine help, both brothers were out of the commune; but that proved the worst of all. They accorded their differences, joined hands and forces, marched against the city, entered it with ease, and held a joint rule for five or six years, which, with some interruption, was continued by their sons, John, son of Nicholas, and Gerard, son of James. To continue were wearisome, since the pair of sons followed the tactics of the pair of fathers. The end of all things was this, that one again was forced to ally himself with Siena, the other with Florence. This time, owing to the occupation of Siena by Visconti of Milan, Florence prevailed. In 1390 the Montepulcianesi sent in their unequivocal submission to the great commune, and most of their troubles were ended. What remains of singular is that the Grand Duke Ferdinand conferred the town upon his wife Cristina of Lorraine absolutely, and that she coined money there in her own name as lady of the land.

When I say that it is a town of few graces, I may be taken to mean that I do not think it worth a visit; and truthfully I do not, except for the highly curious in dilettantism, or the highly interested in Politian. The Piazza, or Rock of the citadel, has the severe

The sights.

MONTEPULCIANO.

look of a barrack square — not a tree, not a painted loggia, little grass. Fronting upon it are the ragged brick of the cathedral, the maimed stump of its belfry. The Palazzo Pubblico has a machicollated screen of heavy stonework and a short tower, in shape like that of the Signiory at Florence, and said by the learned to have been

the model for it. One fine palace there is here, the Pucci, I believe, with two loggias, and a beautiful brick moulding for a cornice. As for interiors, that of the church would be handsome if it were not so inordinately wide, and if the pilasters were not so heavy as to dwarf themselves. There is a splendid picture by Taddeo di Bartolo of Siena, there are two ugly statues by Michelozzo, designed for the tomb of one Aragazzi, a poetaster, and by the door are two bas-reliefs of the same man's, admired by Mr. Addington Symonds, but not by me. Personally, I have no liking for that Florentine adroitness which could copy anything so well that the very excellence of the imitation defeated itself. For if you copy and add nothing, of a surety you take away whatever worth your copy might have had. Consider these bas-reliefs, which, because they stare from their harsh surroundings in this mountain-hold, are better illustrations of the thin confectionery of Florence than most things in that city itself. The crowded nudes upon them are in the manner of an archaic Greek *stele;* but exactly in the manner. The figures are squat, and wriggle in lines like leeches in a bottle. Why? Because the Greek made them so. Aragazzi and his wife are in toga and chiton, their swarming children are mother-naked.

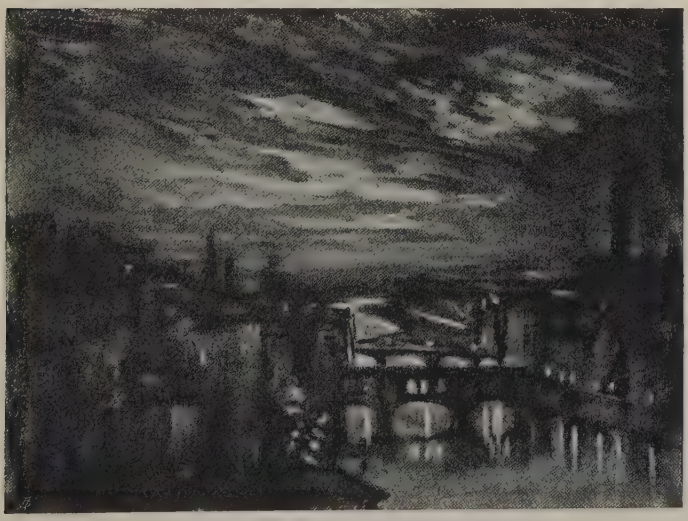
Why? Because the Greek chose it. Now when I reflect upon dead Ilaria at Lucca, or the dead Cardinal of Portugal at San Miniato; when I remember that lovely nymph with the distaff who presides over the tomb of the Conte Ugo in the Badia, I feel that it was better, in art, to be flimsy than arid. The Florentine suburbans, Mino and Desiderio, may have been frivolous, but they were never pedants. Children never are. They may have been affected, what we call "precious," but they were as limpid as running water. But Michelozzo's wriggling nudes are repulsive — to me, at least. Another exercise in the frigid, which has its admirers, is San Gallo's church of San Biagio in the plain immediately below the town. A yellowstone, cruciform church, capped by a tall cupola — whose form is formalism, whose rigidity is mistook for dignity, I have never seen a worse church than this, though there are others as bad: one at Prato, and two at Cortona. To worship there — I tried! I and a few bored peasants knelt there for an hour of a Sunday morning: it was like kneeling in a sepulchre — a sepulchre of windy shams, reducing Catholicism to doll's house work.

As to Politian, who left this town as young Agnolo Cini, and now has monuments enough in it — a street, a theatre, and three or four *caffès*

to his name — as to Politian, this is hardly the place to speak of him. He was, of all the versifiers of the Quattrocento, the most dextrous and the best able to "pretend," as children say; he had learning, too — but he had little else. He had nothing approaching to the incisiveness of Bojardo, none of the native fluency of the Pulci, none of the silken quality of Ariosto, who was so nearly a poet that real poets like Byron and real critics like Landor and Stendhal have thought him one. Politian, I judge, was at heart a fair-weather young man, whose career was to get on. Pliant as a withy-wand he could have turned to any use. He found scholarship the fashion in Florence: he bought a Greek grammar. In a short spell he knew all the Greek there was to be known, and a sweet-toned old dreamer — a true student — like Ficino had the noble humility to call him master. Politian master of Ficino! But this was not enough for him. He found Luca Pulci confecting a sugar-epic — *Jousting of Lorenzo* — and getting glory from it: straightway he confects his own sugar-epic — *Jousting of Giuliano* — does it better; and the greater glory is his. He finds L. B. Alberti making comedies "in the Greek manner," and Lorenzo turning his idle fancies to *Sacre Rappresentazione*, and is too wise to copy such men

Politian.

as they. But he absorbs their forms into his *Orfeo*, which Mr. Symonds could not really have thought a masterpiece. It is, at any rate, a compendium of every mode known to pedantry — your historical-pastoral-epical-tragical-threnodical-bacchanal, cut up into the infantine passages of a Mystery Play. It reads gaspily as they do, but is none the better for that. It is the shell of a play, as San Biagio is the husk of a temple. Such things — and there are many such things in Montepulciano — make the judicious grieve.



EVENING — THE ARNO, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER XIII

VAL DI CHIANA: SIENA TO CORTONA — TRASIMENO

THE short road to Cortona takes the traveller over grey mud-heaps to Asciano, thence through a fine upland country to Sinalunga; and there he will find himself in prospect of the great plain which they call Val di Chiana, withal river Chiana there is now none. Of the two nations, Asciano and Sinalunga, I have little to report save that both are handsome, prosperous, and well-seated amid trees and airy downs. Asciano has something of the habit of a Berkshire town with its good red houses faced with white, and its strong churches. But its emblazoned gateway, its red-brick bell-tower, and tall stone tower of the commune, correct the first impression. Monasteries upon the hill-tops all about, bullock-carts in the bare streets, a brisk and civil race of men, straw-hatted Madonnas marketing at dawn: no such things are in Saxon Berks, though the maids of Hungerford be fair to see, and Newbury wives make straight children.

Asciano, Sinalunga.

From the piazzale at Sinalunga — again a very ornate market-town, with a red Renaissance

CORTONA.

church cupola'd and belfried as befits — you have, as I say, the whole range of the plain from

Fojano to Montepulciano, beyond it the great lake, beyond that again the Perugian heights which lured Flaminius to his destruction. A noble prospect into which you descend rapidly by way of Torrita and Bracciano.

Val di Chiana.

Once a poisonous swamp, where (as old Fazio says) were —

volti pallidi e confusi,
Perché l' aere e la Chiana è lor nemica,
Sicchè gli fa idropici e rinfusi[1] —

the plain is now a blossoming garden. Better husbandry have I seen nowhere but in the *contado di Lucca*. Compared to that green paradise it is treeless, and in hot weather can be insufferable; but it is pleasant to see the tall corn, which is life to men, growing out of the wicked earth which was men's death. Whatever the Chiana (*Clanis* of the Romans) may have been — and an expression, *le Chiane*, in Fazio leads one to suppose that in his day it had a divided course — it is now reduced into orderly canals, admirable for irrigation and drainage, but in no wise picturesque. Neither the austere

[1] The Val di Chiana was always proverbial for pestilence. Dante likens the groan of Malebolge to those you would hear —

se degli spedali
Di Valdichiana tra il luglio e il settembre
E di Maremma e di Sardigna i mali
Fossero in una fossa tutti insembre.

desolation of the Maremma, nor the green pro-

CORTONA.

fusion of our Fens, nor the golden breadths of La Beauce in France, belong to the Val di Chiana.

The cultivation is universal and minute. The fields seem never to run more than two acres, so one's progress is as if one were to drive through twenty miles of allotment gardens — comfortable, but not exhilarating.

There are trees along the western side of the lake, and beyond them near a quarter-mile of reeds before you get to the water. Its silver stretches seem uninhabited by birds, and are too shallow for boats of any draught. Pleasant as it is to be near water, this is not the sort of water one would choose. Not this way came Flaminius escaping Hannibal, though there must always have been a road by Orvieto to Rome. He tried to squeeze in between Passignano and the heights on the opposite shore, and paid for it, as all the world knows. In mediæval days the Baglioni of Perugia were lords of the lake. Here, at Castiglione del Lago, a high rock, and the only one, jutting into the water they had a great double-towered castle — one tower of stone, three-angled, machicollated in red brick, and one four-square standing in the water. By its aid they held the Orvieto road, as by Magione on the other side that of Perugia. The little town, but for its castle which is apart from it, looks blighted and poverty-struck; and so it is. I found its only inn — Trattoria del Trasimeno —

Trasimeno, Castiglione.

to be quite remarkably bad; but its landlord as unmistakably good. His engaging candour would commend itself to any humane traveller. He was a fresh-coloured, white-haired little gentleman, well-set up, and dressed in a suit of Scotch plaid. He had the decisive air of a

CORTONA — PALLONE.

retired colonel turned squire, but kept all the simplicity of his nation. After the preliminaries of hand-washing were done he took me by the button apart; and "*Senta, Signore*," he began, "this is a poor little country, where we think ourselves lucky to be alive at all. There is no meat, there are no fish but eels, and eels at this

season of the year are not good for the stomach. But there does happen to be in the house a fine young dead chicken. He, I need not say, is much at your service." I engaged the chicken, adding that I assumed his death to have been violent. The landlord rubbed his chin, looking at me out of very blue eyes. "As violent as you please," he replied. "These hands have newly strangled him." Evidently the murder had been done partly for my sake, and he not sure how I should take it. It proved an atrocious bird, for which I had to wait three-quarters of an hour in a cave of flies and bad smells. Everything was bad that day — the wine flat and sour, the minestra full of garlick, the bread musty, the maid frowzy and ill-tempered; but to the little landlord everything seemed colour of rose since he had done a stroke of business. He had killed an uneatable fowl, and I was to pay for it.

I take it that the lake is in Umbria, that country of soft fells, great saints, and little women.

Into Cortona.

It is geographical fact that the road from it to Cortona — a nine mile affair — is so. But Cortona itself is undeniably Tuscan, mountain-built, harsh, and uncomfortable as nearly all hill-towns in Tuscany are. The city stands high, scattered up the slope of a mountain, but not crowning the top. There may have been a

great citadel there once, where the fortezza now is

CORTONA.

with the church of Santa Margherita, but nothing of the sort can be seen now. Coming at it from

Trasimeno, you fail to get it in silhouette: the effect is of a litter of grey buildings. On the northern road — that which takes you to Arezzo — the sight is finer.

Nine miles though it be, with eight of them dead straight, your road turns as many times in the last of them to reach the gate. It is better going than the way to Volterra, for this reason: there are more gradients, and they are easier. At the second turn you pass one of those cruciform, domed churches — *aut Sangalli aut diaboli* — of which Montepulciano boasts; after that you top it by a thousand feet or more and drive up the narrow street to a bad inn.[1]

Drab and dingy, stinking city,[2] it has an origin so backward and august that no man can reckon it or tell how splendid it was. I find that I must quote Dennis: "Traveller," says he, "thou art approaching Cortona! Dost thou reverence age — that fulness of years which, as Pliny says, 'in man is venerable, in cities sacred'? Here is

[1] *Nazionale* is its name, and I don't think there is another. It is dirty and ill-found. The host and his wife are obsequious but helpless; the entrance swarms with beggars and touts. The one capable person is the chambermaid, a young and pretty woman, with the most exuberant person I ever saw in this world.

[2] This, by the way, was not how Dennis found Cortona. Writing in 1860 or so, he says: "She is no longer to be accused of filthy, ill-paved streets, nor of mean and squalid houses." Now, however, I do accuse her. I never was in a viler-smelling town.

that which demands thy reverence. Here is a

A GATEWAY, CORTONA.

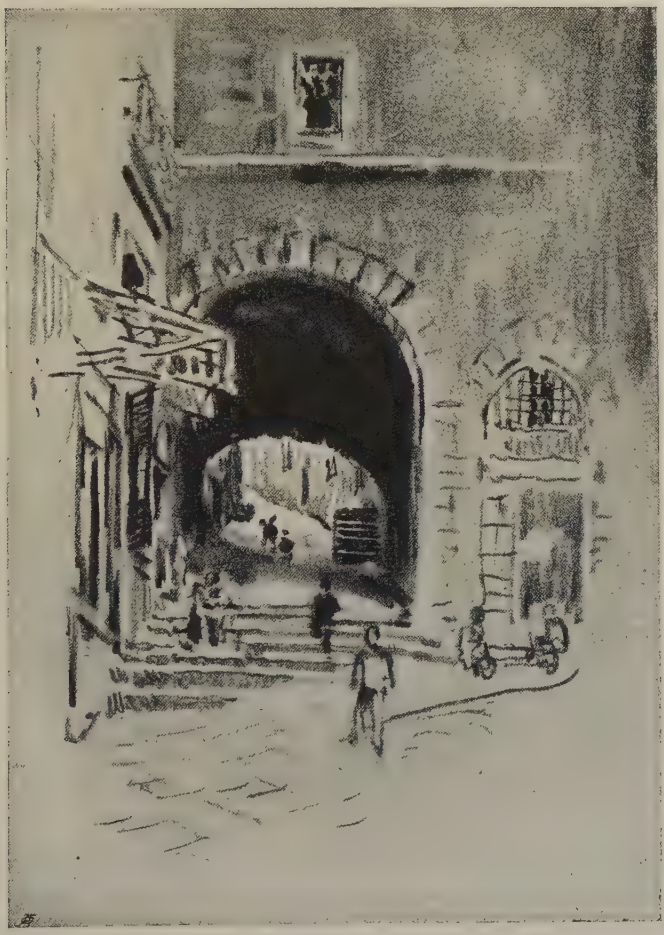
city, compared to which Rome is but of yesterday — to which most other cities of ancient renown

are fresh and green. Thou mayst have wandered far and wide through Italy — nothing hast thou seen more venerable than Cortona. Ere the days of Hector and Achilles, ere Troy itself arose — Cortona was." He cites the legend that God-descended Dardanus was its king — a claim almost as great as Fæsulæ's; and then he says, "Yon solemn city was once the proudest and mightiest in the land, the metropolis of Etruria, and now — but enter its gates and look around."

This I did, and found Cortona, as I have said, drab, dingy, and stinking. It was so bad in this last particular that I saw the sewer-traps were blocked up with wedges of wood; and yet the fall must be like that of a cataract, for the streets are so steep that at various turns of the way you could step off the pavement on to the roofs of the street below. Its churches are — with two exceptions — derelict and ruinous, its pictures (magnificent though they have been) are cracking, dropping, and clouding with cobwebs. I had a six-fingered guide who was a liar and object of suspicion to every man he met. I had respected the name of Cortona and all its dim vistas; I am prepared to respect those still — but I saw little of them.

To describe what I did see — the Municipio is a fine bastille, well placed in the piazza of its

name. I saw the rings of Albizzi, the griffins of



STREET, CORTONA.

Baglioni, the stags of Salviati among its shields; no doubt Casali was there also — that proud family

which, when Cortona was free of Arezzo, lorded it there for five generations and ended in a nephew who murdered his uncle to get the dominion, and was himself strangled by Ladislas of Naples, and his lordship turned into a servitude and sold to Florence. The gates and curtain walls, which run up to the fortezza on the top of the hill, and are in places forty feet high, are magnificent building: two of the gates, at least, are Etruscan. And then there are the Cathedral, and the Luca Signorellis.

The Duomo.

Tucked away as the church is behind an arcade and a palace of the bishop, it is next to impossible to get a view of it outside; taken in hand as it was in the eighteenth century, when whitewash was the only wear, and painted over in grey and white regardless of tenth-century marble, the view you have of the inside is unhappily too pronounced. In proportions it is a good church, and in parts excellent. The square choir behind the high altar contains the Signorellis; but these apart, there are some things to look at — *e.g.* a Roman sarcophagus of Centaurs and Lapiths, which they fondly represent for the tomb of Flaminius, but which, since it contains a portrait of the deceased, and that a woman, gives them the lie as soon as they utter it. The high altar is adorned with

candle-bearing angels in the manner of Mino of Fiesole, and near by is an aumbry for the holy oil which is incontestably his, and a dainty, delicate piece of low-relief it is. I must not forget a side chapel on the right which enshrines an old *pietà* of stone, rude and stunted old dolls enacting

FARM NEAR MONTEPULCIANO.

the dirge. Before this piece — which is as if peasant-mummers should play a holy mystery and be frozen in the act — I saw the Canons of Cortona kneel and sing a litany, old fat-encased sinners and young, lean ones with very bright eyes and much assurance, demure choir-boys pinching each other and looking away — all kneel-

ing and singing together before the staring effigies. Not until this daily rite was performed dared I approach the choir and see the Signorelli pictures.

Luca the Great.

Mr. Symonds tells a fine story of this man, how he had an only son, a beautiful boy of perhaps fourteen years. This child took a fever and died in a day and a night, in his father's absence. They come and tell Luca. He hears the news in grim silence, but packs up his gear and away. Arrived at house he goes into the chamber, turns out the nuns watching his dead, and locks the door upon him and it together. There he remains for some two days — long enough to alarm his friends. They knock, they pry through the key-hole: no answer, nothing to be seen. They break a way in: they find the dead boy stripped naked, his father with an easel before him, painting his beauties. Strange, preoccupied, hard man — with a touch of the faun, nay, of the satyr, about him: hard in his outlook and hard in his handling, he was. He has a fondness for rendering flesh like burnished metal — bronze or brass as the case may be, and can never resist your beady-eyed young ruffian, full of blood and sin, your superb, over-fed young animal who will drink blood if he can spare time from shedding it. His virgins are *Bona Deas*, his Christ a Prometheus; his old

men are nigromancers of Chaldæa, his honourable woman might suckle Pan. In whatsoever mood you find him there will be some hint of the woodland wild in some corner of his painted cloth. Adam and Eve — little moulded bas-reliefs, as they seem — stare up at the great Tree (on which

CASTIGLIONE DEL LAGO.

the Virgin rises crowned) as they might really have stared at the stock of it, the Tree in the Garden, fierce, darting creatures, barely masters of the beasts they led. And that picture is in his tame, early manner when he was copying Perugino. In the *Deposition*, where he had come to his own, there are stooping figures of

women and young men which you might think Venetian, if they were not as metallic as Mantegna; but with a pagan tang which Luca alone possessed (and Michael Angelo took from him).

Even in that first manner of his he showed the stuff he was of — which was not Perugino's. He had a depth of colour not known to the Umbrians — as in the *Assumption*, where the solemn greens, roses,[1] and purples are wholly beyond the Perugian. So also is the figure on the right of this picture — a Sibyl in a gold cope, with the savage, fine face of a young Baglione. On the other hand, the bending Creator, the stamping angels and dropt flowers are all of the childish Umbrian habit. On the same wall as this *Assumption* is an *Ascension of the Madonna*. Here she rises above the open tomb, angels all about her with viols, harping her to the skies. A great decorative picture, sadly faded. The *Communion of the Apostles* and *Noli me tangere* are both Venetian in scope and tone: not so the *Deposition*, which is very original indeed: deep in colour, heightened with gold — reds, crimsons, and browns on a field of dark green.

At San Niccolò, a little church in a garden,

[1] Peony-colour: deeper and hotter and more metallic than the hue of roses.

which you reach by a tremendous paved hill, there are some more Signorellis — one remarkable. This is the *Madonna della Seggiola*, so called: a pensive Virgin holding a fine Child on her lap, Sampietro and Sampaolo standing by. The whole thing is in tones of three colours — green, red, and brown. There is no other colour at all. The very sky is green, fainting off to white. The altar-piece here is hard, with brazen flesh-tones, in his Orvieto and least pleasing manner. There is nothing so good as the *Pan* at Berlin: but Signorelli was one of the few Italian artists who cannot be put into a category — and left there. It is astonishing how few there are. Giotto, Donatello, Piero della Francesca, Lionardo, for Florence; Signorelli for Umbria; Mantegna for Lombardy; Paolo Veronese for Venice — some great portraitists, whom I leave apart — are there any others to dare a position in the Arts comparable with Dante's in letters? No, indeed.

I have no more to say of Cortona, save that I was glad to be out of it.

CHAPTER XIV

AREZZO: QUICK AND DEAD

I DROVE to Arezzo from the south, by the Val-di-Chiana road, through low green hills and fat furrows — a Leicestershire landscape, which, without specific attraction, was comfortable enough to fill me with content. The day was fine, the wind was mild, there was a noble sunset. I reached Arezzo, the prosperous place, before dusk, dined and looked about me. A many things I saw: the streets were full of strolling, evening citizens; great churches, great houses loomed solemnly out of the dark. But (as often happens) the best sight of all was to be had from my own inn window. . . .

An Aretine.

She is very pale in the face, and her hands are dangerously white. If her eyelids are heavy in the morning it is no wonder, for she is late to bed and must be up at cock-crow. But she is able to laugh at her own leaden plight, and so to win your smiling acquiescence in that and all her other concerns. No scowling,

no yearning Godward from her prison bars: crook your little finger, she will laugh at it; nod your

AREZZO.

head, she will mimic you; salute her, she will sweep you a curtsey. She is responsive to open-

heartedness as a hedge bird to the sun; sings, in fact, at a kind look, like Dante's blackbird.

Full of this innocent kind of gaiety, which bubbles as a spring under moss; not without proper coquetry, careful of her figure, tender to her hair, deft in the way she wears her clothes, I consider her the chiefest treasure of Arezzo, for reasons which I intend to declare, though I know nothing of her but her pleasant face. She sleeps and commerces with the world, eats her scraps of meals, and says her little dutiful prayers in a square box of a room facing my own across the way. So far as I know, she never leaves it from Sunday night to Sunday morning. She has no worshippers but me, though familiars not a few; no gilt hearts are offered to her, no hearts but mine. By profession she is a dressmaker, and not a Madonna; but if her name is not Mary, it should be Martha, the delicate, cheerful, thrifty, diligent soul.

She goes to bed at ten; at least, that is the time she turns out the gas, which has been drying her since dusk. At six of the evening she has eaten some pallid mess in a plate and drunk a little red wine; she has left off work to secure this refreshment and gone back the moment the plate was bare. Humming an air, she has got up and wiped her mouth — and this knowing well that for

Corso, Arezzo

four solid, gas-thickened hours she must be stooping over a machine, pedalling like a convict at his crank, spying sideways for a crinkle in the hem, narrowing her chest, craning forward her young

THE MARKET-PLACE, AREZZO.

head. I have begun at the end; let me stretch back to the opening of her long day. She sets wide her shutters at six in the morning and busks herself. Who would know this better than I, who myself got up at five to be beforehand? Of toilette affairs I know nothing — I am no

profaner of mysteries. It was six by the church bells when she rubbed her eyes; at half past, when I looked again, she was praying by her bedside. She was by then in a black skirt and lavender blouse, her fair hair was becomingly adorned with tortoiseshell pins. A minute or so later she is to be seen sipping a glass of coffee (which has been making over the gas), and chattering nineteen to a dozen with her three mates. Sleepy, for she still rubs her eyes; tired to death, for she yawns and strains her arms, straightens her back, and stares with a sigh; with a vista before her (if this be Monday) of fifteen hours' work for every day of the six — she and these other young women, if you will believe me, gossip and whisper and prick up their ears, preen themselves before the glass like pigeons in the sun, are all agog for the sights and sounds of the scarcely-peopled street. Now and again they are at the window; pale prisoners! the sun has no grudge, but greets them fairly. There is a nod for the baker's boy — another lax child of the heat. He returns the salute gaily, with a flourish. Coffee glasses are put away, the gas is turned out; they stoop their shoulders to the yoke; the hum of the sewing-machines will hardly cease to accompany their voices till night falls.

What a life for a pretty girl! But how daunt-

lessly borne; with what interest, what sparkling eyes, what a sweet humour! What is the aim of it all? Is coffee an end? *Minestrone* on a greasy plate? Are these things so desirable that to get the right relish you must work fifteen hours a day for three hundred days a year? And if, by the time you are thirty, signorina, you have therefore worked sixty-seven thousand five hundred hours — will the coffee still be reward enough, the relish of the *pasta* still be keen? Out upon it! *Ces dames*, you tell me, must live? I know that very well. But that they should live ungrudgingly, not cursing me in their hearts; that they should be able to laugh, hum tunes, nod to the baker's boy from their prison casement high above him; that they should dress themselves prettily and turn about before the glass; that it should be possible to suck juices out of such poor husks and shreds of days, bloom like flowers in unsunned corners of the ground — all this fills me with wonder and thanksgiving. I tell you fairly, not in all dappled Italy have I seen a greater treasure than this. O spacious, cleanly, white-walled Arezzo; cattle-stocked city of marts and ploughing machines; birthplace of Vasari; demesne of the astonishing prelate, Bishop Guido Tarlati! With such daughters as these, if your sons were of a piece,

Apostrophe.

I would add my suffrages to yours for any prosperous fate that you might choose. To be like Milan, for instance, is the aim of any Italian city, and few there be without the secret belief that so some day they shall be. I would hope this for you, Arezzo — your piazza should be a maze of circling tramcars, whirling for ever there like the drifting lost souls of Dante's first hell — if only I could think your young men worthy of it. But I do not think them worthy of it; how can I while my gas-fed nymphs of the sewing-machines peak close-girdled in their attic? Was not Petrarch an Aretine? Aretine and Man of Feeling, he did well to seek out Arquà and the green breadths of the Euganean hill; for he who melodiously wailed the Lady of Avignon must have served a seraglio here.

> Subito in allegrezza si converse
> La gielosia, che'n su la prima vista
> Per si alto adversario al cor mi nacque —

Petrarch admitted the rivalry of the sun for his services to the face of Laura; I make the best I can of the man whom I sometimes see in the society of my nymph. He is a fat, devil-may-care, chair-tilting fellow, whose waistcoat and trousers are not on speaking terms — evidently a friend of the house. He is vastly familiar, wanders in and out of the work-

A friend of the house.

room at will, tips his bad hat to the back of his head, sits on the table, smokes a cigar, ruminates

THE CATHEDRAL, AREZZO.

aloud upon men and cities, has a caustic wit, and is evidently not too guarded in his illustrations.

I detect barrack-room reminiscences in some of his pleasantries; not that I hear them, but judge by his knowing air. Moreover, my nymph sometimes checks her laughing in midstream, then looks with feigned interest into the street. Certainly, however, she is pleased, therefore she pleases me. As the sun enhanced his Laura's beauty to Petrarch, so here I particularly admire my nymph for her conduct in this nice affair. She has no conscious hand upon herself or on him: she is neither timid nor provocative, neither arch nor frankly beckoning. In a word there is no smoulder of sex about her. Now, my countrywomen are all sex, and Frenchwomen too — but with a difference. The first make, and the second await what both desire — namely, advances; but my Aretine has no such thought. She is simply glad to see her friend, to play off her tongue against his, to laugh at his jokes, and to make him laugh at hers. If he admires her clothes, as well he may — she has a charming figure, a gimp and belted waist — what then? Do you suppose she is flattered? Not in the least. She is pleased, and that is her reward. She has no second thought. If she had, if by some chance spark — ah! I have seen a Tuscan girl under the love-stress; there's no doubt about the thing when it comes. But, awaiting that terrible access

of labouring breath, glazed eyes and shuddering, that *rigor*, that tetanus, that blue-lipped struggle in deep water, I do affirm my lady of the work-room as untainted as a boy of twelve.

Do I wish to write of her with passion all alight? Then let me see her in the presence of a client, for there are her simple delights as yet — in deftness and in courtesy. If courtesy be to set at ease by being at ease, she is then most courteous. If gentle birth do best show out in sympathy, why, then there is in all the Val d' Arno no better blood than hers. They are of humble station, these clients — maid servants, farm girls, factory hands, and such like. They come in at what times they can spare, mostly with a friend — for the thing is of tremendous importance, you must understand — whose judgment is to turn the scale; and then the conference, the discussions, the vivid play of hands, the cocking of heads, now this side, now the other, the appeals to the testimony of the mirror, the pinning and tying, the business of knees, fingers, and eyes! For the milliner must kneel and the client lift her elbow and look down over shoulder — and yet it is hard to say which has the most interest of the three, which is most ardent in the chase. Occasionally a fourth, yet more rarely a fifth, is called in to some especially

A client.

fine piece of fitting. The milliner may well despair, and I know that she does — for once, in the case of some vast-sided daughter of the plough, I saw her fairly cry; for all this, if you please to understand, she gets not one penny piece; this is fair charity of her heart which prompts her to give full measure of what she has in store. And, again, it is her pursuit of the ideal — the flaunting, flittering, impossible ideal of smoothing the breadths over ungainly haunches.

Aspirations of the scholiast.

If I could settle in Arezzo, in a decent messuage, with cupboards for a few books, a view of the tower of Sta. Maria delle Pieve, a small square of land where I could grow vines and stocks and a carnation or two for my wife's girdle; so soon as ever the tenement was handfasted to me, I should go to the shop in the Via Cavour and pay my addresses to the little milliner. It would take time, perhaps a year; but what hurry is there? The day would come at last when I should say, "Come, my dear, get roses in your cheeks. Turn out the gas; you have lived on that long enough. It is sufficient for me that, in spite of it, you have betrayed all the symptoms of a perfect wife. You make yourself pretty because, being so pretty at heart, you cannot help yourself. You are patient, cheerful, thrifty; you sing all day. In any man's

Santa Maria Della Pieve, Arezzo

house you would be better than a linnet in a cage; in mine you may run a risk of being a goddess on a pedestal. If I had my way, Ferdinando Primo should be pulled down from his perch by the Duomo steps, and you should be

THE CATHEDRAL, AREZZO.

set up — you, laughing as you bend to your daily burden — an emblem of what is most precious in Tuscany, above Michael Angelo, or Sustermans, or the Medici diadem, or the Appanages. Come, lady, come, do my hand the honour to take it. Just Heaven! what a holiday you shall have!"

This is my plain ambition at present: to live and die in Arezzo, a prosperous country town in

a fold of the hills, and to be warden of its chief treasure, a pretty, fading drudge, who is happy because she has a pure heart.

Another Aretine.

Consider now another Aretine, who exacted a monument — and has got it — more perdurable in the records of his countrymen, and in addition to that, has his tomb of travertine and black marble in the cathedral. Well may Herr Baedeker call him "an ambitious and energetic prelate"; this was a man indeed — no other than Bishop Guido Tarlati of Pietramala, many times a lord. His family, which came from a castle above Arezzo, on the watershed of Tiber and Arno, had always been for robbery and the empire, and always great people in this chosen city of both; but while certain Ubertini held the see they were forced to bide their time. There might be two Popes of Rome, but Arezzo is a little place. The first thing, then, that I learn of our Guido is misfortune. In 1308 the Aretines turned him and his friends out of their towers and strong houses; the Guelfs came in and made a peace with Florence. It was a day of party names, when Florence herself was distracted by Black and White. The new Aretine power called itself the Green Party, and hoped for the best — a council of perfection in Tuscany. In the very same year Corso Donati was killed

at San Salvi, and Dante's trumpeted Saviour of Italy, his Moses Redux, chosen to be Emperor;

AREZZO.

a month or two elapses, the Tarlati with their Ghibellines fill all the mountain roads about

Arezzo, storm the town, carry a gate at the sword's point — and there is an end of the Green Party. The Tarlati sat in the high seat, and all Italy heard of them before long. Guido Tarlati was chosen Bishop, as I make out, about 1320. His first act was to make friends with the notable Castruccio of Lucca, and his next to form a company of knights under his own banner. With these he made great play. It happened to be a time when Florence found her hands full of Pisa and Castruccio; time of times for the Bishop who, one after another, got all his towns back and brought the Aretine contado to very near its former pride.

Remarkable conduct of the Bishop.

You may observe his progress up to this point upon his tomb, where with strange irony the glory and shame of him are set side by side. Cynical cenotaph! He is made Bishop; he is hailed as lord; these are the first scenes and their superscriptions. You see the Pope's Legate laying hands upon him, then the kneeling ancients of this place, and himself, outside the walls as yet, deprecating the honour they do him. He is sitting afield here, robed as a prelate should be; but above him, where you would look for a cross or staff, is the horned head of a battering-ram. Sinister emblem! In the next tablet behold

him within the walls on a tall throne, elbows out, hands on knees, about him imploring figures.

THE PRISON, AREZZO.

One clasps his feet, one his knees, others strain up their arms. Under this is written: *Il*

Commune pelato — the people fleeced. *Pasce oves meos*, indeed! You see him as lord — *Come in signoria* — with assessors to hand; kneeling suitors receive his decree. He builds the walls, habited now as a general, in mail, riding a heavy horse. Then begins the series of his conquests. Lucignano he took; he sits in his pavilion and imposes his terms upon abject Lucignanesi; Chiusi, Fronzola, Castel Focognano, Rondine — why go on? He pulled down Laterina to spite the Ubertini; he left not stone upon stone. He got Città di Castello by treachery and connivance in the night. Branca Guelfucci was tyrant there, but the Bishop drove him out and kept his State. This and his exploit in Lombardy when, in defiance of authority and interdict, he crowned Lewis the Bavarian with his own hands in Milan, were his top of offences in Tuscany, in Italy indeed. From all sides came embassies to Florence for help against this devouring Bishop, from Perugia, Orvieto, Siena, from Gubbio, from Bologna. But the Bishop and his friend Castruccio held between them the East and the West; and then there was the Emperor, who, if not friendly to the man who had made him so, could have no genius for friendship. All that happened was that Pope John XXII., from his safe distance of Avignon, excommunicated Guido

until he should give up Città di Castello, and relinquish his lordship of Arezzo. The Bishop, you may be sure, did neither. Now, a Ubertini was at this time provost of the church at Arezzo, and Guido knew quite well that the

VASARI'S PIAZZA, AREZZO.

Pope's move had been inspired by this man or his friends. Therefore he demolished a Ubertini castle at Laterina. The Pope replied by a deprivation, which (no doubt) lost a good deal of force as it voyaged out from Avignon. However, the Cardinal Legate read the Act publicly in the Piazza Santa Croce of Florence; the Bishop was unbishoped, and Provost Ubertini bishoped

instead; "but," says the chronicler, "he got little out of that, for with all the help of the Pope and Cardinal Legate he could not obtain one penny of his dues. For all the temporalty and spiritualty of Arezzo were held by the said Guido Tarlati, and he was tyrant and lord."

Tyrant and lord! Death was the only deprivation for such a man, and death paid him a visit in 1327. He (the Bishop, that is) went in force to Pisa, to help the Emperor and Castruccio get the town. They got it; then he and Castruccio fell out over some triviality and came to injurious words, and with these, "bickering like daws," into the Emperor's presence. Castruccio called the Bishop traitor, saying that when he beat the Florentines at Altopascio, if the Aretines had come in force down the Val d' Arno, as they had promised, the Florentines would not have stood — and this is probably true. The Bishop called him "Traitor again." Who but Castruccio had driven Uguccione della Faggiuola out of Pisa, him and all the good Ghibellini? Who had thriven on Aretine money? Who had broken treaties? etc., etc. There was no lack of recrimination, and little of the subject matter of it. The Emperor listened to it all without partiality. He did not praise the Bishop, and he did not reprove Castruccio. Whereupon

His respectable end.

Bishop Guido flings out of Pisa in a fume, rides fast and far into the south country, sickens at Montenero in the Maremma, and there dies — 1327. He made "a good death," as they say, pricked by mortification or conscience, God (who judges hearts) knows which. He admitted that he was a sinner against Pope John and Holy Church. He renounced the Emperor as heretic, and foster-father of all the heretics. He went so far as to confess John XXII. wise and holy — *santo e giusto* — which testifies, surely, more to the credit of his heart than to that of his judgment. "With many tears he declared his repentance, and cried for mercy. He had the sacrament of Holy Church, and in this contrition died — which was considered in Tuscany a great thing." No doubt it was. That sardonic tomb shows it all; never was such a picture of *Vana Gloria*. Made bishop — hailed for lord — fleeces the commune — sits as tyrant — builds walls, storms citadels, takes homages, sets up, pulls down, crowns an emperor — and, for last scene, *La morte di miseria*, miserable death! This work was done by Agostino and Agnolo of Siena, 1330, three years after the old sinner's wailing end. It is the most instructive thing in Arezzo, which fell on evil days after his, was handed about from tyrant to tyrant, snatched in 1336 by Florence, owned by the Duke

of Athens in 1342; free the next year; besieged, sacked, and sold by the Sieur Enguerrand de Coucy, a freebooter from Flanders, in 1384; sold that time finally to Florence.[1]

Arezzo itself.

The result of an alien occupation of such duration has been to turn a city, whose citizens were full of character, into a little Florence; you may call it, if you will forgive a not too bad joke, the Medication of Arezzo. One would have liked to see the town which those mountain-lords and robber-bishops had made for themselves; but one cannot. One can only see where they went to church. Two great churches there are. The cathedral, which dominates the place from the rock of the citadel, was built by a Ubertini Bishop, Guglielmino by name, and continued by Bishop Guido in his odd moments. Very French outside, of great height, great length, and little width, it is extremely solemn within — dark, heavy, inspiring the true Gothic alternations of spirit, the *Quid sum miser*, and *Judex ergo*, the veiled eyes, crouching knees; and then, with lifted heart and hands, the *O altitudo!* I hardly know better Gothic in Italy,[2] and deny that San Francesco at Assisi comes near it. Everything goes to make mystery. There is very

[1] See Appendix to this chapter, History of Arezzo.

[2] San Galgano, south of Siena, a ruin, is better.

The Bishop's Tomb. Arezzo

little painting in the church; painting is an explicit art. There are several great tombs set in the walls — the Bishop's the greatest — and in a side chapel, behind a fine grille, some Della Robbia wares of the best time. These, again, with their serene, patent, Tuscan ways, and that trick they have of taking you by the hand, as if to say, "Let us keep together; there is nothing to be afraid of" — these familiar, happy things might break the impression, if you could see them. But fortunately you may pace the long nave in absolute gloom without any ray of comfort from them; or you may kneel by the choir-wall while the Bishop says Mass or the canons sing their office, and see near by you some scanty-haired, grey-faced old woman rock herself about or beat her poor head against the stone. If you wish Della Robbia companionship, it is not here that you must seek it. It is very possible, I think, that there is too much of it in Tuscany; at any rate, there is no doubt but that it is intended for the light of day and the open air.

Vasari and his betters.

You must pass over a good deal of Vasari on your way down from here, his house, his loggia, and some abominable painting in San Francesco, happily on canvas, removable and removing. It is a point which might have held the philosophic pen of Lessing, why it is

that a man may twaddle in letters and rarely fail to please, while his brother, twaddling in such an art as painting, or in architecture, will most inevitably be damned. Here Vasari is very much to the point. The praise of his *Lives* is for its twaddle; the twaddle of his painting and building is their condemnation. For if his pictures are tawdry rant, these pompous palace-fronts and ceremonious plaster arcades are no better. They are court-painting, they are on a par with the *perruquier's* art. They mean nothing but obsequiousness, and tell nothing but lies. Better stuff is hard by. Standing in the piazza you see a bleak old tower of grey and the apse of a church. Both belong to Santa Maria delle Pieve, which is still a noble building, and almost all that is left to remind you of Arezzo's stormy eld. Bishop Guido may have officiated here, in pontificals, with his byrnie underneath; and here stalked towards his God some Conte Guido or another; and here the Duke of Athens, or Sieur de Coucy, may well have been enthroned "Tyrant and Lord," and pedlar also of the Aretine dominion. Margaritone of this town, happier with the hod than the paint-pot, built the church, which has a square Roman front, triple-rowed with arches, a deeply-recessed portal, and a Madonna in the soffit, crowned and girdled

— of such singular charm that one does not willingly leave her for long together. She is stiff, like a doll, has a very slim waist, is gorgeously dressed, and looks as incompetent as a queen ought to be. This is the kind of wondrous, remote lady a man could spill his blood for. She is the kind that would stand still, stiffly smiling, amid the tossing swords and hoarse acclaims of her slaves. Believe me, if you are to have an idol at all, she must be of the Hindoo pattern — vacant-eyed, dumb, frozen out of human ken. Adorable Madonna delle Pieve! She must have been often in the battle, carried swaying to victory — a smiling, glittering, senseless, beautiful dolt. If Bishop Guido Tarlati did not make the hill-towns acquainted with her glorious inanity he was not the man I read him to have been.[1] . . .

[1] A great painter came to Arezzo from Borgo over the hill, filled the choir of San Francesco with pageantry, and got much quiet, painter's happiness in between. This was Piero della Francesca. The *Invention of the True Cross*, for that is his theme, gives occasion for all that is expected of a fresco painter of tastes heraldic and processional — a varied story, solemn disputations of great folk, war-pieces with banners and flying horsemen, buildings, distant prospects, and as much familiar detail as you choose. It is a great and a good story, which begins with Adam in Eden, and ends with Heraclius at the Battle of the Danube. It has tempted all sorts of men, for it has murder enough for Matteo of Siena, who, when he was not dreaming of pale women in golden rooms, saw a sword at every throat, and ruffians doing slaughterhouse work in every piazza ; there are fine ladies for Ghirlandajo ; angels, wise merchants, and saucy boys for Benozzo Gozzoli ; and for Paolo Uccello big-bellied Flemish horses and spears against the sky. What Piero made of all this pomp and circumstance — save that he added much fine heraldry — is not very extraordinary ; but his own

She is flesh and a little blood, my poor milliner; but she is a trope as well. She and dead Bishop Guido may stand for Arezzo between them, where the old and the new lie down side by side; the old content to sleep in the sun, the new awaiting with confidence the time when they too may sleep. Meantime these work all day for the few sols they need, and everybody seems as happy as a canary in a cage. What is become of the hot blood, the murdering, the night alarms, the wild party cries, the raids of hill thieves, which made Arezzo a hornet's nest intolerable to the Florentine bees? Burnt out, died out, or starved out. Meantime the great white oxen slowly pad their day's round, the driver of the hotel omnibus lies lazy on his perch exchanging ejaculations with the facchino. A boy runs down the broad street crying the *Corriere della Sera*, a pretty pale girl in a lavender blouse looks out of an upper window and throws him down a soldo. Up he runs with his wares. By-and-by a burly young man, with his hat tilted back, will sit upon a certain table and read the news-sheet as he

The milliner a trope.

harvesting is a very different matter. One may take it that the trappings only interested him as a set-off to his landscape. That is exquisitely beautiful and true. His palette is the nearest to Tuscany of any painter before him or since. Looked at from that standpoint, these frescoes are masterpieces.

bites his cigar, and three slim backs will be bent over sewing-machines. A trotting man comes along the street to light the lamps; the day is over. They have locked up the church doors, and left Bishop Guido in his tomb to deal with the old ghosts as best he may.

APPENDIX

HISTORICAL NOTES ON AREZZO

To be *umbilicus Italiæ* is to fill a necessary, if menial, office without much profit to the performer; for it does not at all follow that he in whom things centre is himself the centre of things. Thus it has been with that fine city of Arezzo which, lying at the entry of four fruitful valleys, has been preyed upon from all sides, but was never able to push herself far up any one of them. The most beautiful ways of Tuscany spring out of Arezzo; she were more truly called the heart than the navel. For the Arno, running due south from its well in Falterona, turns within three miles of Arezzo to make a northerly course again; and thus two valleys can conduct two hosts of enemies into the plain. Down the Casentino the people of Romagna and the Lombards can get in, and in times past Arezzo could never keep them out for long. By the Val d' Arno she was fatally in touch with Florence. But that is not all. South of Arezzo runs the broad Val di Chiana with a forked road midway; by one prong the Perugians had easy access, and not they only, but the Orvietans and Viterbans on their backs, and all the power of Rome; upon the other there was nothing but valour to oppose the men of Montepulciano, or the chivalry of Siena and all her subject nations; and these indeed had yet another

valley to choose — that Val d' Ambra which meets Val d' Arno above Montevarchi, and so helped Siena to join hands with Florence in crushing the unhappy Aretines. So Arezzo would seem marked out for a warfare more bitter than any other Tuscan city's, and a servitude more abject than even Pisa's was. There is, however, this to be observed, that the town which served Tuscany for a navel, did actually serve her immediate country-folk for a heart. Approach by any one of these valleys you will see evidences of what I mean. Come up the Val di Chiana from Sinalunga; you will have passed Torrita, you will have still to pass Fojano, Lucignano, Castiglione Fiorentino, and other hill-castles before you get to l' Olmo — the place of the great elm which was Arezzo's old boundary. So, coming by Florence; so, coming by the Casentino, on whose wooded rocks Poppi, Bibbiena, Subbiano, and half a score other wild citadels are perched. Every crag in these romantic glens had its robber-chief; and every cut-throat of them ran to Arezzo in his need. The Pazzi, the Ubertini, the Conti Guidi (a brood of eaglets), the Tarlati, all great hill-names, lived hereabouts, and made havoc of the vales. In crushing Arezzo, therefore, Florence was working out the salvation of all Tuscany. There were those wide-reaching, romantic Conti Guidi, for instance. From Monte Morello above Fiesole, by the Mugello to the Sieve, by the slopes of Falterona to the Casentino, thence to Arezzo, you could hardly see a tower which was not theirs, nor enter a village where they had not been beforehand with you. The sod was theirs and the men who passed with the sod. From Guido Sangue, the one child spared in a wholesale massacre, and Gualdrada Berti de' Rovignani of Florence (daughter she was to the good Bellincione) came all the stock. The first war of which there is any record in Florence (after the sack of Fiesole) was with this house over Prato, and the next with them again (in 1146) at Monte di Croce. The Count Guido of the day, in close touch with the Aretines, took his

assailants by surprise, and with help from Arezzo, drove them off with loss. Florence waited for eight years — one knows the Florentine way — before she came on again. This time by treachery she got the castle and the rock, dismantled the first and held the other. "From this time forth the Counts Guidi were no friends to the commune of Florence, nor the Aretines either who had favoured them." That Monte di Croce can still be seen on the cliffs above Incisa. It is one of half a hundred between Florence and Arezzo, any one of which might have made the valley impassable. It is not at all extraordinary that from this day to the end of the fourteenth century there was no long stay of war with Arezzo.

Nor is there any wonder in the fact that, while Florence was Guelf, Arezzo was always Ghibelline. She would have been little profit to the hill-chiefs all about her if she had been anything else. They being feudatories of the Empire, of Frankish stock one and all, were for Cæsar to a man. Under one bishop or another the fortune of war fluctuated — now on one side, now on the other. Guglielmino degli Ubertini was the first Bishop of Arezzo — "more a man of war than of honesty in clerkship," says the chronicler — to make himself tyrant, to "signoreggiare," to lord it there. He did it by strategy, as you may suppose. In June 1287 a league was made in the town by the Guelfs under Rinaldo de' Bostoli and the Ghibellines under Messer Tarlato Tarlati to tread the people down. They attacked the palace of the commune, took the Capitano del Popolo and put out his eyes. Bostoli and his Guelfs, movers of the whole plot, thought themselves safe. But the Ghibellines went over to the Bishop, and he, with his friends of the hills — Buoncontie of Montefeltro, Pazzi of Valdarno, — and his own kin, prepared a night attack which was successful. The Guelfs fled the city and sheltered in various castles down the valley — Rondine, Monte Sansavino, and others. The imperial vicar came to Arezzo from the north — Prezzivalle dal Fiesco was his resonant name — and

began reprisals upon the low-lying country. Montevarchi suffered, and San Giovanni. Then the Guelfs of Arezzo made a league with Florence, and general war began which ended at Campaldino. That battle seems to belong to the next chapter.

From that victory which put Florence at the head of all North Tuscany, they got without difficulty near half the Aretine country. They got Bibbiena, Castiglione Aretino, Montecchio, Rondine, Civitella, Laterina, Monte Sansavino, and might have had Arezzo with a little effort. As it was they contented themselves with building a few wooden towers (which the Aretines burnt), and with running their *palio* of St. John Baptist's day outside the walls, and returned to Florence and to triumph in July. All these places were retaken by the Aretines within thirty years ; for Bishop Guido arose, a greater than Bishop Guglielmino, of whom I have already spoken.

DOORWAY IN THE VIA TORNABUONI, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER XV

AREZZO TO FLORENCE: THE CASENTINO, THE CONSUMA

THERE are two ways from Arezzo to Florence, by either of which you may follow a segment of the circle which Arno makes between those cities. By the lower road you follow the river down-stream through Laterina, Montevarchi, San Giovanni, Figline, to Pontassieve; by the upper, through a valley called Casentino, you go up-stream from Giovi through Bibbiena, leave the river near Castel San Nicolò, and rejoin it at Pontassieve, after it has run its huge circuit round about Pratomagno. I have no hope that I have made myself clear; nothing but a map and a carriage will do that; but it is the fact that Pratomagno, a great outlying mass of the Apennines, is, as it were, the axle-tree of wheeling Arno. There is the choice; the lower road gives the more river, and a better level; the upper road some mountain scenery on either

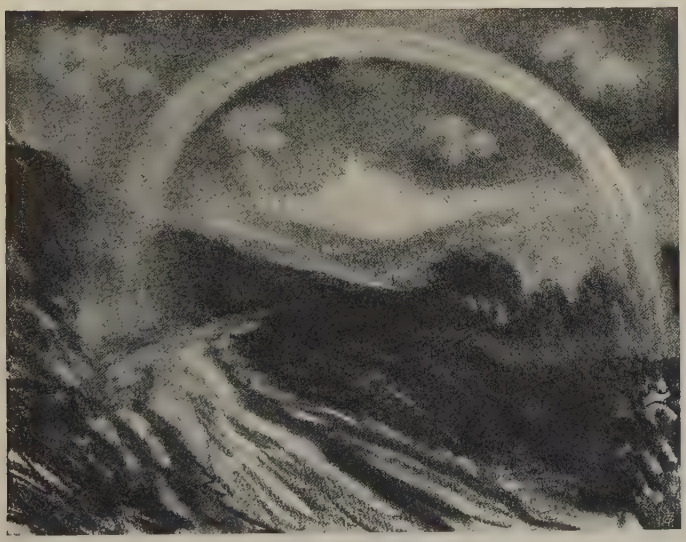
The ways of Arno.

hand, two finely-placed little towns, some memories, a battlefield and a pass, which, though it is not the highest of all the Apennine passes, is one of the most fatiguing.

It is hilly to Laterina, where Bishop Guido had a castle — indeed, castles of his are scattered down all these reaches as far as Incisa — but from that point onwards you never leave the river level, except for a moment at Incisa. Montevarchi is a dull and dirty town, with a vile inn full of fleas. San Giovanni is much better; a pretty country place with an inn covered with cluster roses, and two fine churches to its name. Masaccio the painter was born here, and one Giovanni Manozzi, commonly called Da San Giovanni, another painter of one good picture, and a great many bad ones. His good picture is that black-and-white wonder of light, air, and high spirits which you see in the southern arm of the Uffizii; his bad ones are here in his native town. As for the great Masaccio, I desire above all things to be respectful to a man whom my betters have greatly respected; but for the life of me I cannot get a pulse quickened in the Carmine. Mr. Berenson, for instance, feels that he could "touch every figure," in those Brancacci frescoes; "that it would yield a definite resistance to his touch,"

The lower road.

that he would "have to expend thus much effort to displace it," that he could "walk around it." Well, given a reasonable artistic imagination in the spectator, that would be possible with any set of diagrams in Italy. To me these things of Masaccio's are diagrams — dull diagrams with-



ON THE CONSUMA.

out poetry, charm, or significance. Fresco is an art whose very technique should inspire, as it certainly calls for, spontaneity, lyrical elevation, a cry or a song. It is a water art, therefore it should be fresh, pure, wholesome, and cool. Masaccio's is none of these. It is a wall-decoration on a large scale: there should therefore be

pattern or colour in masses. Masaccio has no pattern, and his colour is dirty. Giotto is out of the reckoning just now; I am not talking of genius. Just compare this Masaccio with the greatest fresco-painter (I speak as a fool, *però*, in good company) that Florence ever knew: I mean Fra Angelico. I have said already, and I say again, that more sufficient, more exquisite, more spontaneous wall-pictures cannot be conceived of than those of the dormitories and cells of Saint Mark's. They are so imaginative, the illusion is perfect; they are so delicate, one would not dare — not even Mr. Berenson would dare — try his test of the finger upon them. They report fairy tales, they take you into Faërie. They are momentary, and yet, to all intent, imperishable things. They give the colour of poppies and corn-cockles to those pure walls; they are so clean that one feels the cleaner for an hour with them. Stimulation of "tactile consciousness" is far from them; they stimulate our far better part. But to return to Masaccio, if only to admit my own unhappy state, I have never found that he stimulated anything at all. The happier are Mr. Berenson and the learned in that, not insensible to Fra Angelico, they can get their pleasure out of Masaccio. Here, at San Giovanni in Val d' Arno, they may apostro-

phise his birthplace if they will. I should have done homage, on the other hand, at Manozzi's if I could have found it; but the sacristan of the Cathedral knew very little about him.

I have never seen the Casentino in that state described by wretched Maestro Adamo's crackling tongue — onomatopœic lines of match- **The upper road: Bibbiena.**
less power that they are:

> Li ruscelletti che dei verdi colli
> Del Casentin discendon giuso in Arno,
> Facendo i lor canali freddi e molli,
> Sempre mi stanno innanzi. . . .

The hills have always been grey when I have seen them, either wet and lurid as when a storm brooded over the river, or bleached nearly to whiteness by drought. Certainly I have travelled finer roads and seen finer sights in other parts of this country.

To reach it, you leave Arezzo by San Clemente, or circle that city's walls more than half — an agreeable thing to do, since the road is treeful; from San Clemente you cut straight across the valley of the Chiassa, and begin to get among the hills at a mean village called Giovi. This plain of the Chiassa differs in no wise from any other Tuscan valley: orderly husbandry, cropped trees, dry river-beds, much dust. Caliano has a castle and a bridge, Subbiano a bridge and a

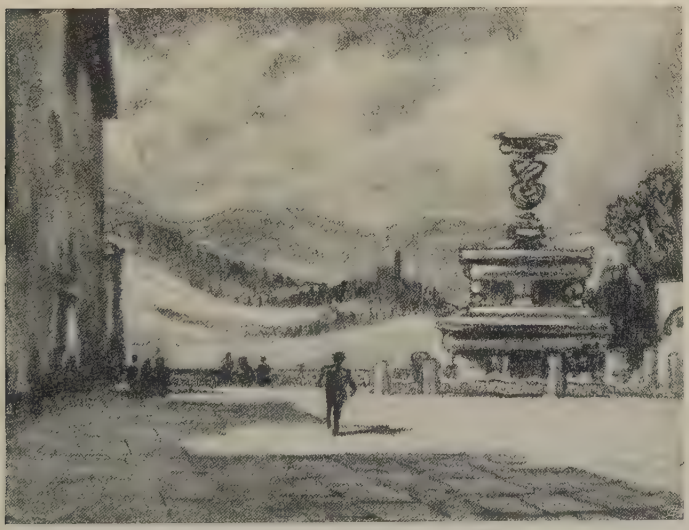
castle — and a weir over the river which I should like the fishing of in April. Above this the Arno runs through a rocky gorge, and the higher you go the better it becomes. The colouring is beautiful — a river of pale green, swift, broken water, silver poplars above it, a white pebble beach on either side. So you mount the road to Montealto, where there is a castle at the mouth of a great combe. It is a huge, red pile of building; and above it is Monte Calenaja, a barren grey fell, strewn with boulders of rock.

The hills near Rassina are scald-headed, pale and dreary: so pale, indeed, that under the merciless sun they shed a reflected light upon the valley, which is narrow here and edged with patchy poplars. After Rassina they open out somewhat, and on a little one in the midst stands Bibbiena, a brown, walled village with a tower at each end. Exactly behind Bibbiena is Monte Penna, a mountain of some size. In the recesses of that is La Verna, which mysterious retreat was chosen by the Burning Seraph for his sealing of Francis. There is a great convent of Friars Minor there which Mr. Pennell has seen, but I have not.

In the church of this narrow-laned town there are two Della Robbia's — one a *Deposition*, all pale blue and white, one an *Adoration*, with green rocks

for the cave, and a charming heavenly choir above. Now the experts in this ware go by colour very largely, and would probably ascribe the *Deposition* to Luca and the *Adoration* to anybody but him. There I hold that they would be wrong. There are

Bibbiena.



PIAZZA BIBBIENA.

passages in this last piece — a cherub peering down upon the Babe, with clasped hands and rapt childish interest, which shows real insight into the ways of children; shepherds, too, upon the hill, with dogs beside them, all gazing upwards at the star — things of this sort which, in my belief, Luca only could do, because Luca was the only

craftsman among them who happened to be more than a craftsman, a poet undoubtedly, and an artist, whatever that sadly-abused word may imply. But poet, I hope, is unequivocal enough. I once went through the Bargello without a catalogue and without help of the superscriptions, and tried to identify Luca by a plan of my own. He was one of the few sculptors who could express not so much bodily movement,[1] as mental, as emotional movement also. This was his "gift," as we say. One or two painters had it — Neri di Bicci, Baldovinetti, the Sienese Sassetta: quite indifferent painters in everything else. With that clue in my head, I fancy that I succeeded in seven cases out of ten; in the other three the ascription, let us say, may well have been wrong. There is no doubt whatsoever as to the merits of these two Bibbiena things: the *Deposition* is as inane as wax-works, the *Adoration* is instinct with passion, wonder, rapture, all sorts of emotions with which craftsmen can do nothing and poets everything. There is nothing else to see in Bibbiena except the view of Poppi from the Citadel — Poppi on a hill, the counterpart of Bibbiena's, with an intolerable castle of severe grey, trees and little houses huddling beneath it like chicks under the mother's

[1] In that Donatello beat him, and Verrocchio too.

wing. It is by no means a fine castle, but for its size — a perfectly square block with a tower at one end like the smoke-stack of a locomotive. But its bigness is very impressive; it obliterates everything, and is said to have a good court and staircase, on the plan of the Florentine Bargello.

The Consuma: Campaldino.

You leave the Arno at Poppi, and from the top of the spiral road by which you climb to the Consuma you have a view of Castel San Nicolò and the field of Campaldino. A plain it is called in the accounts, but it is rather a great down, sloping gently to the river. There is then a broad field of fairly level country on two sides of a brook. The whole position is not unlike that of Lewes.

As for Campaldino, the story of the great rout is familiar, or ought to be if it is not. It is one of the critical points of early Tuscan story, one of the few decisive battles of that vexed tale. You can read it in Villani: how Aymery of Narbonne led the Guelfic League and Gherardo Tornaquinci bore the royal standard of Anjou; what a host of them — knights from Florence, Lucca, Prato, Pistoja, as of course; the Sienese to avenge a former smart, the Volterrani, Sangimignanesi, Colligiani — went by the way of the Casentino wasting the lands of Count Guido;

how they were met by the Aretines in the plain at the foot of Poppi "in a plain called Campaldino, in the village called Certomondo"; how eagerly the gage of battle was thrown down, and how joyfully taken up. One must needs admire the gallantry of the Aretines. They

UPPER VAL D' ARNO.

despised their enemy, "saying that they preened themselves like women and braided their hair"; they had twelve captains of their battalions, whom they called the Twelve Paladins; nothing could stay them from attack. All this, in the rough, is in the true great manner of the Song of Roland. But chivalry in Tuscany was an exotic growth,

imported but never sane. If Guido Novello of Poppi was Roland he proved a cravên; and if Bishop Guglielmino was to stand for the great Archbishop Turpin he would have been little comfort at Roncesvalles. For Count Guido Novello, who was to strike in on the Florentine

LA VERNA FROM BIBBIENA.

flank with 150 knights, held back from the first onslaught to see how the battle went, and misdoubting his strength fled to his castles in the hills: so much for the Aretine Roland. As for the bishop, the chief reason for the hastening of him by his party seems to have been lest he should have time to make a pact with the

Florentines by which he was to cede to them all his riverine castles in return for 5000 gold florins a year for the rest of his life. Some such terms had been actually proposed. So they urged him forward in a hurry. Such were the Paladins of Tuscany. Corso Donati, the great turbulent Florentine — Il Barone as they afterwards called (before they killed) him — played a nobler part. He was Podestà of Pistoja at this time, and had been ordered to stand his ground with the Pistojesi and Lucchesi, and not to attack "on pain of losing his head." The Florentines were in the van and bore the first brunt. But Corso, "when he saw the battle begun, cried out like a brave man, 'If we are to lose, I will die in battle with my own people; and if we are to win, let them come to Pistoja to judge me.' Whereupon he freely moved his company and struck the enemy in the flank, and was the greatest cause of their rout. And this done, as it pleased God, the Florentines had the day, and the Aretines were routed and discomfited, and there were killed more than 1700 of horse and foot, taken more than 2000." Among those killed were the treacherous, tyrannous, fighting Bishop Ubertini, Guglielmino de' Pazzi, his nephew, "who was the best and most wary Captain of War in the Italy of his day."

Buonconte, son of Count Guido da Montefeltro, — and how he, being struck mortally in the throat, fled up the gorge of the Archiano torrent — and there —

> "My sight failed me, and all my breath
> Ended in Mary's name ; I fell
> There, and my flesh stayed still with Death."

— all this you shall read in the Purgatorio. Three of the Uberti they lost, one of the Abati, two of the Griffoni of Fegghine — and Guiderello d'Alessandro of Orvieto who carried the Eagle of the Empire. The Florentines lost, but not nearly so heavily, nor men of such mark. It was a momentous victory, and, as was proper, marvels were not wanting to impress it on the mind. For the news was known on the very day and at the very hour that it was made. "After breaking their fast," Villani says, "our lords the Priors had gone to sleep and rest themselves from the fatigues of a night of vigil ; and suddenly there was knocking at the door, with a cry, 'Get up, get up, for the Aretines are undone!' And getting up and opening, they found no man, nor had their servants outside heard anything ; whereof was great marvel, and this held for a notable thing. For it was the hour of Vespers before anybody from the host came with the news."

I could not find the Archiano, whose flood carried Buonconte down to the sea; but Mr. Gardner was more fortunate, or more careful. He says it is "about an hour's walk from the battle-field, perhaps a mile from the foot of the hill on which Bibbiena stands." This is vexatious, because I must actually have driven over it.

THE VALLEY OF THE UPPER ARNO.

He speaks of it as "banked with poplars and willows"—which reads like a sluggish stream rather than a torrent.

As for the Consuma pass, I have to say that it is not the place in which to be overtaken by a thunder-storm. That was my lot. I remember the sheeted rain, the knocking of the heavenly artillery; the road a foaming water-course—

darkness, fury, and a shrieking wind — and, in a white vision revealed, a tall shepherd fighting his way against it, leaning on a staff, his clothing streaming like a flag behind him.

ON THE ARNO, FLORENCE.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION: THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY

LET it be assumed, for argument's sake, that I have made one thing — nay, two things — clear up to this point: the first, that the heart of Tuscany is worth the getting at; the second, that there is no sure road to it through the plastic arts. Architecture, sculpture, painting (according to me) show the Tuscan as a charming, accomplished, ingenious, and wholesome creature; they evince his happy, childish fancy; they show him, even if he be picking over garbage, as undefiled by the performance, and transmuting the dross he picks up into the prettiest filigree-gold you can care to have. But they do not reveal the deeps of him, if deeps he have. The limpidity of the Della Robbia, the exquisite impertinence of the Desiderios and Minos, the amorous reveries of Botticelli, even the crystal perfection of Ghirlandajo, when you have pierced the enamel of their extraordinary accomplishment,

An argument resumed,

and have allowed for a certain deal of observation in the artists, give you proof of just so much trifling with matters of moment, or with matters which would be of moment to anybody else. Love, life, death, heaven, hell, to all the people upon earth, are mute familiars of the hearth. These are the gods we needs must worship, and cannot worship ignorantly. What have the Tuscans to say to them? Can we by any means be present at their secret rites? Not by any means open to us so far; for it is clear, I think, that although, in plastic art, manual facility may deceive the heart of the worker, it can never for any serious moment deceive that of the beholder. The artist's passion may all flow out at his fingertips. I believe that the Tuscan artists' did. There remain to us the arts of music and poetry. Here I deal with the latter.

We must begin by cutting Dante out of the argument, for reasons which have already been shadowed. Some men may be too frivolously minded to deal with realities; others too seriously minded to deal with them before the vulgar. Dante was one of such.

and restated: Poetry.

> O voi che avete gl' intelletti sani,
> Mirate la dottrina che s' asconde
> Sotto il velame degli versi strani!

He was telling a Mystery; but there remain great

men enough, and men of copious performance. If all of these rhymers, from Fazio and Folgore to Petrarch and Cino, thence onwards in ever-increasing battalions, Sacchetti, Boccaccio, Bojardo, the Pulci, Politian, Lorenzo, Bembo, on and on to Guarini, Metastasio, and Bernardino Perfetti — if all these people, I say, were poets indeed, there should be no trouble in finding the way to the heart of Tuscany; for poetry is an art which absolutely demands an emotional impulse before a note of the music can be uttered.

Well, but are they true poets? Are their verses the lyrical equivalent of their passion? Can we read the Aretine heart of Petrarch, or the Pistolese heart of Cino, as we can read the Cockney heart of Chaucer or the Lowland heart of Burns? This is worth thinking about, not because it is the way to appraise great poetry — the valuation of great poetry is by no means our present business; not for any such reason as that, but rather because we desire a short road into the Tuscan heart.

A test for Petrarch and others.

Looking upon poetry, then, as a road to the heart, let me inquire if there is any direct road through Petrarch, or any Tuscan poet whomsoever, comparable to such as Burns's "O wha my babie-clouts will buy?" or (since the bravado of that is a

transparent veil) to "A'e fond kiss"? I don't intend to quote Petrarch again. I asked the same question about him before, and cited him to give weight to my answer;[1] but then I put him side by side with Dante. To-day I am perhaps pitching the battle rather low, not asking of the man and his school any stave comparable to the solemn ruminations of great Wordsworth or the erotic raptures of young Keats. I don't ask them whether they ever entangled their love-thoughts in such fantastic embroidery as Shakespere his in his sonnets, or Marlow his in his suggestive narration. No; but I say that Petrarch was a lover, Cino a lover, Lorenzo a lover — or so they thought. Did their love-stress burn as clear in them as his in Byron — foolish, petulant, self-enwrapt, magnificent, downright Byron? You will get nothing of this kind in any Tuscan whose writings are known to me.

Here is Lorenzo to a woman whom he thought to love:

Lorenzo.

O chiara stella, che co' raggi tuoi
Togl' all' *altre vicine stelle il lume*,
Perchè splendi assai *più che il tuo costume?*
Perchè con Febo ancor contender vuoi?
Forse i begli occhi, i quali ha tolto a noi
Morte crudel ch' omai troppo presume,
Accolti hai in te: adorna del lor lume,

[1] I beg to refer the curious reader to *Earthwork out of Tuscany*, Chap. IV., "Of Poets and Needlework."

Il suo bel carro a Febo chieder puoi.
O questo o nuova stella che tu sia
Che di splendor novello adorni il cielo,
Chiamata esaldi, o nume, i voti nostri.
Leva dello splendor tuo tanta via;
Che agli occhi che han d' eterno pianto zelo,
Senz' altra offension, lieta ti mostri.

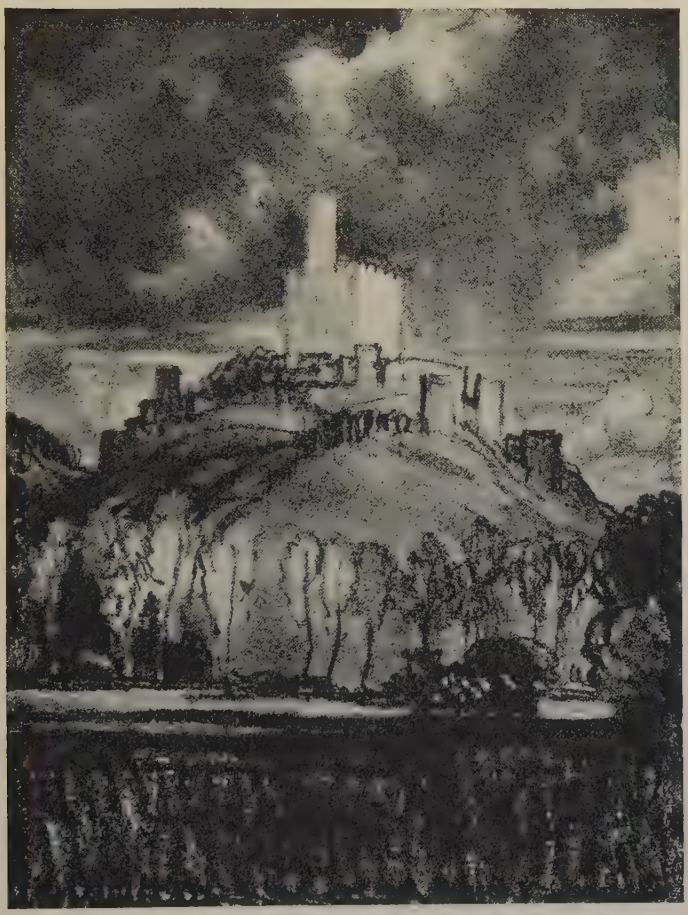
Now that, in the sense of accomplishment and a handsome compliment to a woman, is nearly as good as can be; for it is accomplished enough to know that a common word, if it will do the work, is infinitely better than an uncommon one. Dante proves that over and over again, and here the phrases I have italicised are really prose made lyrical by feeling. *Più che il tuo costume:* a common tag of every day. Very happy, very dextrous; and yet the thing tells you nothing except that the writer was a clever fellow.

But, O Heaven!

Shakespere.

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowest thy estimate:
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking;
So thy great gift, upon misprisions growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.
Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter —
In sleep a king; but waking, *no such matter*.

In artifice the same; yet Shakespere's pro-



POPPI.

thonotary terms show us the man's golden heart. In skill, of the same degree, for his "no such

matter" is exactly as powerful and as commonplace as Lorenzo's "il tuo costume." And yet — the two have only to be juxtaposed.[1]

Where, then, are we now? Why, here, I think: that Tuscan poetry, highly educated, highly sophisticated as it was, juggled with the passions and emotions just as the other arts did in that country; that Tuscan poems are about anything or nothing, and mean little more than delight in the doing, playful weaving of the fancy, a happy tracing out of phrase-arabesques, a comfortable tingling of the vacant walls of the heart's chamber. They do not open the door, nor clear the road, nor reveal the Tuscan nature. So there's for them; and now let me deal with what does.

[1] I say nothing here of narrative poetry: epic, so called. There are a few Tuscan folk-ballads to put beside our *Chevy Chase* and *Jamie Telfer*, our *Binnory O!* and *Berkshire Tragedy*. Mr. Symonds quotes two, *Ginevra* and *L' Avvelenato;* and Professor Tigri says that there was one upon Paris and Vienne, of which I have only seen extracts. But those two which I have seen whole do not show much of the romantic spirit. The Tuscans were not, indeed, romantically inclined — the least mystical of people, though I observed that Mr. Maugham, in a recent work, says that Florence was a city of mystics. Mystics in Florence! It seems to have been otherwise in Piedmont. Miss E. M. Clerke cites the *Donna Lombarda*, a most dramatic, tragic, and romantic narrative. As to the Tuscan sham epics, from the *Teseide* to those of Roland and Renaud, I have not concealed my opinion of their worth whenever they have crossed the road. It is not necessary that an artificial epic should glorify a national hero; Milton's did not, nor did Virgil's. The destiny of Rome is Virgil's theme: *Tantæ molis erat* is the key-phrase. But the *Morgante*, the two *Orlandos*, the *Giostra*, the *Gerusalemme*, and all the rest of the frothy affairs glorified nothing but the writer's wit, and there's an end of the matter.

In the dewy mountain villages which you and I have traversed of late, on the mossy slopes which overlook Pistoja, in cloud-girt Barga, in San Marcello, and Pracchia, and Cireglio, the people sing songs which they themselves have made. So in the hill country south of Arno, whither we have tended by the valley roads; in San Gimignano, in sheer Volterra, in Cortona, the long grey town; in Pomarance, and Certaldo, and Barberino, there are golden lads and girls who, when they long for one another, sigh in rhythm and fall, when they have bliss of each other thrill like thrushes on April evenings, when they part moan in music, and when they hate give wild lyrical utterance to their heartaches. These are the facts. In Professor Tigri's *Corpus* of this native poetry (*Canti Popolari Toscani:* Florence, Barbèra, 1860) you may run the whole keyboard of the heart of man and woman, under the stress of the one primal passion of love, at least; they sang of very little else then, and so it is now.[1] Some of their songs have been admirably translated by Miss E. M. Clerke, and printed in a little book called *Fable and Song in Italy*, which

Folk poets.

[1] I have cited a remarkable exception to this rule. Travel has turned one girl of my acquaintance into a poet. She comes from the Mugello country.

also gives a no less admirable, though necessarily short commentary upon them. Mr. Symonds has rendered some of them in *Sketches in Italy and Greece* (new edition, vol. ii.), and linked them together in an essay which treats them sympathetically, though not from my present standpoint. He sees in them the raw stuff out of which Petrarch fashioned his sugar-bakery. I see them as pathetic little images, too rough not to be sincere, and as different from Petrarch's looking-glass languishings as a girl crying in bed for her lover is from a Fragonard nymph pretending to be coy in a pink and blue bower. The great point, however, which Mr. Symonds makes is very important to you and me. He corroborates Professor Tigri's assertion that these poems are still made by the unlettered poets.

Let us examine into the thing. In Celle, a mountain village above Pistoja, lives Nencina; in Campiglio, on another spur of the Apennine, lives Beppino. She is a tanned little peasant, with green-grey eyes and yellow hair, with strands of gold in it;[1] he is

Fons et origo.

[1] Most of these girls are very pretty. Stendhal says: "J'ai remarqué de fort beaux yeux chez les femmes de la campagne; mais il n'y a rien dans ces figures de la douce volupté ni de l'air *susceptible de passion* des femmes de la Lombardie. Ce que vous ne trouverez jamais en Toscane, c'est l'air exaltable, mais en revanche, de l'esprit, de la fierté, de la raison, quelque chose de finement provoquant." It is true, so far as it goes, but it certainly does not go into Sienese territory.

tall and rather lean, has a round, dark head and a sullen look, which, however, belies him. He is not sulky at all, but very shy and conscious of his long legs. The sun, wind, and rain have coloured him as with walnut juice; he is as tough as leather, frugal, simple, and as clean as gold. You may have seen him any day in the slope fields hoeing between the olives, or straying in the clover after his pigs, or digging with a heart-shaped spade whose handle is six feet long — cutting into the juicy marl as if it were cheese. A fine young savage, this Beppino, with the starting look of a faun in his eyes; bare except for cotton shirt and breeches, and an old hat. Donatello has made him a dozen times, and Almighty God makes him still by the hundred a week up here in the wet mountain air.

As for Nencina, she goes barefoot too — for wood and water, goose-herding, gleaning, vintaging. She may go out in bevies with her mates, or she may go alone; and if by chance she meet Beppino (which is his business), she will give him "good day," or, if she be in company, a prim little bow of the head in answer to his lowered cap. What has happened to change the relationships of these two — to show him an aureole round her bare head, to touch her tawny hair and turn it to fine gold, to glorify her feet,

to give her wings, to set her floating over the ground like a questing angel? Or to put mastery into his brooding eyes, to make the trees bow their heads to him as he walks, the sun announce him, the growing dusk declare him gone? Eh, who knows? I dare swear it began with him. He saw her suddenly, the youngest of the angels, and haunted her whereabouts. Out on the hill, in the sun-steeped misty mornings, who comes slowly round the shoulder of the rock to her pasture-ground? Who lurks in the copse to spy for her? Who loiters about Celle in the evening twilight, when the maids are gossiping on the doorsteps, plaiting their straws, singing, or scolding the children? Who comes kneeling to the sung Mass on Sundays? who dips into the stoup with her? Ah, and who is that who, on moonlight, still nights is standing in the village street, looking at her window, or haply singing in the silence and dark as he walks alone through sleeping Celle? I think Beppino began it, but am sure that Nencina was aware of its nicest shade of beginning. The point to be remarked upon is this: that, the moment they love, these two innocent dunces begin to sing. Here, again, I am on the facts of the case. This boy in love, this entangled girl, begin to make poems. They sing. So they sang a

Nota.

thousand years ago, so five hundred years ago, so now. Words and music of their song are theirs, the music mainly traditional, the words not all traditional, but varying with the poets and their place in time. Modern things — the *vapore*, the railway, the threshing-machine, conscription, emigration — come in. Professor Tigri, a Pistolese himself, has known lads and lasses touched with this divine fire; Mr. Symonds has heard one of them compose, as he sat, an exile with his comrades, by a Sicilian fire. I, too, have known a girl of the Mugello, who, when she was moved, uttered herself in natural poetry (on post-cards!), than which nothing could be more exquisitely candid, or more exactly just.

I say poet and poem advisedly — for such they certainly are. It is no case of a comforting jingle — Quality.

> The rose is red, the violet's blue,
> Sugar is sweet, and sweet are you.

It is to that effect, like all the love-rhyme in the world; but it is poetry. It reveals, it articulates, it informs, pierces, lifts up. It shows, beyond any cavil, that at heart this mountain people is what the upland Scots have been, what the Icelanders and Norse have been — natural singers, self-revealing only in art, and artists only (like

the best of us) when their hearts are touched. Now, since we have been trying throughout these volumes to get to the Tuscan heart, since two volumes have been expended to prove that all ordinary channels fail, I have thought it good to end this book with a sight of the true road.

Form. A word as to the form in which this poetry is expressed. There are two, strictly; but the second, the *stornello*, or snatch, form is too slight for my purpose. The other is the *rispetto*.

Rispetti run in the ordinary eleven-syllabled Tuscan verse, the verse of Dante and Petrarch, with the ordinary weak ending. They may have a quatrain or two quatrains of alternate rhymes, that is, they rhyme A B, A B and (if there is a second quatrain) *da capo*. They must end with a rhymed couplet, or two rhymed couplets. When there is but one couplet, the sense of the quatrain is repeated in it, with varying words; when there are two couplets, the sentiment of the first is repeated in the second with slightly varying words or arrangement. In this case the sense of the quatrain may be left alone. I hope this is clear; but in case it should not be, an example will settle all difficulty.

Here is a simple quatrain to begin with.

A girl sings —

Domenica mattina gentilmente
So dove andesti a far la rifermata;
E c' era gente che ti ponean mente,
Me lo vennero a dire insino a casa.

Observe that *casa* and *ata* are considered an assonance. Now for the couplets —

Quando me lo dicevono ridevo,
E poi in camera sola io piangevo.

Second couplet: the words alter, but not the sense —

Quando me lo dicevano, cantavo,
E poi in camera sola sospiravo.

To clench all this — which is important — I shall give an English version of Miss Clerke's.

A boy sings —

Wouldst see thy servant die of love straightway,
Dress not in curls those shining locks of thine;
But down along thy shoulders let them stray,
Where they seem strands of gold from out the mine.
Where they seem chains of finely threaded gold,
Fair are the locks and fair the head they fold;
Where they seem skeins of gold and silk most rare,
Fair are the locks, and she who combs them fair.

So much for poetic form, which in point of accomplishment and dexterity is as little below Petrarch, as in simplicity and candour the matter is far above him. Now for content; and there they beat him altogether, for they at once enfold and inform.

Content: Love-dreams.

I cannot better Professor Tigri's division of the *rispetti* into all the phases of young love-making, nor begin more reasonably than he does, at the first flush of its dawn.

Here is the picture from her side. She is snug abed with her mother; all still. Then she hears him come down the street singing softly as he goes. Here she herself sings the facts —

> Last night my love went singing down our street,
> I, wicked one, could listen from my bed:
> I turned to mother, where she lay asleep,
> And on her shoulder cried for that dear lad.
> Now all the pain he gives me on this sheet
> I write; and we shall read them when we're wed.
> And we will read them every one, my heart —
> O my fair love, with witchcraft for thine art!
> And we will read them all, line after line:
> O use more craft, and take the more of mine!

But on his side, when he thinks of her, it is to particularise and enhance every little act of her daily life. "In the morning," he sings, "in the morning when you leave your bed, the clouds fly away, the sun comes up over the mountains to look at you. The angels fly down to help you, to tie your shoes and lace your stays. The church bell rings, you go to mass; all the neighbours stand at their doors to see you go. When you come into church, it is your eyes that light all the candles. You dip your finger in and

sign your white forehead — you curtsey and kneel down — and, ah, the grace of you, kneeling pious there!"

Or, thinking of her person, it is of flowers he thinks naturally.

O gentilina, gentilina tutta!
Garofanate son vostre parole —

Carnationed are your words! A phrase for Keats.

E l' alito che v' esce dalla bocca
Odora più che un mazzo di viole.

All fragrance and her come to him together. *A vase of scented water*, he calls her: "E sete una caraffa d' acqua lanfa."

Thinking more curiously, more reconditely, he says that when her mother had her to make she went up to high heaven to get counsel how she should go to work. The queen of the gods said, "Leave her making to me." So then the prophets came to model her face — prophets with their incantations and prophesyings; and four gods were called in — Venus, Saturn, Mars, and Narcissus.

Youth in love.

She may be very young when all this wonderful service begins to encompass her on every side. He admits it when he sings to her one day —

Giovanettina, che hai quattordici anni,
Sei piccolina e m' hai cavato il cuore!

Fourteen, did he suppose her? Heavens! hear the imp's own confession —

Son piccolina, e non ho anche dieci anni;
Son già segnata al libro dell' amore.

One does not, to be sure, need to be a poetess to be in love at ten years old; but one does to confess it.

She confesses,

To her mother she is very frank. "Mother," says she, "if you will not give me my Beppino, I shall go out into the world and never come back. If you were to see him, how straight he is, and how fine; oh, mother, you would fall in love with him yourself. He wears a cloak of three colours, and his name is *Beppino Stealheart* — Beppino Rubacuore."

and is humble.

He never sings, as she does, this meek kind of strain.

"High are the walls of your house," she wails, "and mine can never reach them. I am not worthy of your hand, I am not worthy to love you. No, no, nor even worthy to look at you!" Poor little soul — and then she goes on to ask for his pity —

Se non son degna, onde degna ne sia,
Ve lo domando in grazia il vostro amore.
Ve lo domando in grazia et cortesia;
Meriti dame di maggior valore
* * * * *
Per gentilezza ognor ti voglio amare,
Bello, per povertà non mi lasciare.

And again —

"Tell me, dear," she cries, "what I ought to do if I wish to save my soul. I go to church, but there I cannot stay; not even long enough my beads to say. I go to church and nothing can I pray, because I always have thy name at heart. I go to church and nothing can I say, because I think of thee and all thou art."

If the like of these things don't take one into the intimate heart of young lovers, there is nothing for it but to learn Tuscan and renew one's own youth. And let those who fancy that Petrarch, as the greater poet, can take them nearer — try him!

Beppino hurts her sometimes; here is a wounded note — **When she is hurt.**

In que' begli occhi ci hai la calamita,
Giovine bello, sappili portare.
Son quelli che consuman la mia vita
Notte nè giorno mi lascian posare,
E non mi lascian posare un' ora :
Padron non è di sè chi s' innamora.

And she can run the whole gamut of unhappy love; here plaintively —

Sarebbe meio non t' avessi ma' visto,
La lingua non t' avesse mai parlato :
Non averei lo mio core afflitto,
Ne men l' avrei tanto addolorato . . . ;

and here a young man writes with real tragic intensity —

Sono stato all' inferno, e son tornato ;
Misericordia ! la gente che c' era !
V' era una stanza tutt' alluminata,
E dentro v' era la speranza mia.

There's a wild scene, and how plainly put down! "O I have been in hell, and have come back. Mercy! the folk down there! I saw a chamber all lighted up, and there within it lay my hope." Mr. Symonds has translated the whole of it (*Sketches and Studies*, vol. ii. p. 298).[1]

That is grief made bitter by hopelessness; there is a gentler sort — that of the yearly severance. For Beppino must take his herds down to the Maremma for the

Parting.

[1] Here are two other scraps wrought in misery : —

Within my breast a candle's lit,
And burns within and shows not out.
Tigri, p. 143.

Non mi chiamate più biondina bella ;
Chiamatemi biondina isventurata.
Tigri, p. 146.

And here is dramatic narration : the parting and meeting again of Paris and Vienne. Tigri says, "degni del Tasso." But I say, Tasso could not approach the simplicity of —

Andar si vede
In terra, e come morta s' abbandona.
Più non si regge la meschina in piede,
E da sè stessa alla terra si dona.
Non ode, e pur non sente, nè non vede,
Qual è colui che per pietà la sprona
Quando si pensa esser di vita priva,
In braccio del suo amor si trovò viva.
Quando si pensa esser di vita sciolta,
In braccio del suo amor si trovò tolta.
Tigri, p. 166.

winter, or may go thither in June for the harvesting; and Nencina must stay at home and wait for him. She cries —

Tutti mi dicon Maremma, Maremma,
Ed a me pare una Maremma amare.

Nowadays there is the military service; and in some sort that must always have been a factor. But there is hope to sweeten this cup, and very prettily he can turn it; he says —

E per segnale lascerò una stella ;
Essa rilucerà sinchè vivo io.

But she cries out to his comrades who are taking him to the depôt —

"Soldier, soldier, off to the wars, keep a kind eye for my lover. Tell him not to shoulder his arms, for he has never been in a battle. Tell him not to sleep under the open sky; and tell him the keys of his heart are in my bosom. Tell him not to sleep in the marshes; and tell him I shall think of him for ever."

And now she is alone —

I see the rocks for me do weep,
The mountains open, deep to deep
Wails, "Now he leaves her, now he goes ;
Cursed be the day that brought these woes."

Here she is watching for him to come back —

E vedo, e vedo, e non vedo che voglio,
Vedo le foglie di lontan tremare.

E vedo lo mio amor in sù quel poggio,
E al piano mai lo vedo calare.

She sends him messages by the birds since she has no other servants. They drop them on the trees by his course — on the trees of Pisa, the trees of Leghorn. And here she cries out upon his road —

The Leghorn road's a fine affair,
And happy he who fares it.
My love he is its wayfarer,
But, O my heart! he wears it.
O Leghorn men, tell him the day,
When he may fare the other way!
O Leghorn men, tell him the hour,
And on his bosom lay this flower.

It is very characteristic of Nencina that, when it is her turn to go away — into service, she gives Beppino a little lecture —

Giovanettino, diamoci la mano,
Oggi o domani me ne vado via:
E vado in un paese tanto strano,
Chì sa se non mi mora per la via?
E s' i' morissi e non tornassi più
Coll' occhi bassi attende alla vertù.

He, on his side, knows her bird-errands and looks out for them —

If on a tree a bird I spy,
He seems to whisper in his way,
Lad, from Pistoja here come I
To greet you from your lovely may.
I answer, Birding, homeward fly,
Be speedy to her lattice, pray.

And you shall see the eyes and face
That drew my poor heart from its place.

Meeting.

Here you have her waiting for him on the rocks. She sees him coming.

Deccolo là; che ben vienga, ben vienga!
Deccolo là; che ben venuto sia!
E dategli una seggiola che siegga,
Che fa fiorir le rose per la via.
E fa fiorir le rose e le viole—
Giorno e la notte ti tengo nel core,
Giorno e la notte son ventiquattr' ore—
E venticinque ti tengo nel core!

Jealousies, quarrels, recriminations, reconciliations — all are here in music. I can't give even a specimen of each. Here, however, are two which have unusual character. This is hers —

Divers pangs.

If you love me, I love you; if you hate me, I hate;
If you wish for my joy, so joy be your fate.
If you scorn, you are scorned; if another you crave,
Or another crave you, then another I'll have.
Seek me, I seek you; if you fly me, I run.
If you long for to have me, by you I'm undone.

And this also, curiously reasonable, for a little scope.

Let me go free and as I please,
Weep not, I'll never leave thee.
Had I a thousand loves they're thine,
Pastime should ne'er deceive thee.
Were I a ten score years away
My heart would hold thee fast;
Or thrice ten score years coming home,
I'd have thee in the last.

Last scene of courtship, the serenade. In this case the friends of the lover come with him, and sing for him; and they sing, not to the girl, but to her parents. Thus —

The serenata.

Here come we with our serenade
To give you pleasure and good night.
You have within a loving maid
Under your charge and in your sight.
And if perchance asleep she's laid,
We bid you wake her, 'tis her right.
Tell her her lover passed this way,
Whose true heart holds her night and day.
Tell her her servant went by here,
Whose good mind keeps her all the year.[1]

He sings, and she should listen — but she must not come out to him on any account. His delicacy is a beautiful thing —

Se dormi o se non dormi, viso adorno,
Alza la bionda e delicata testa.

This is an exquisite piece, which has proved too much for Mr. Symonds' muse (*loc. cit.* p. 288).

I continue the original —

Ascolta lo tuo amór che tu hai d' intorno,
Dice che tu ti affacci alla finestra.
Ma non ti dice che tu vada fuora,
Perché la notte è cosa disonesta:
Facciati alla finestra, e stanne in casa,
Perch' io sto fuora, e fo l' inserenata.

[1] "O curtained fair," she is addressed sometimes: "O bella che fra' cortinaggi stai!"

There can be little but beauty and honesty in the heart of a young man when love turns it to such uses as this.

Here he blesses the house he lives in, because it is beautified by her shadow as she passes —

Io benedisco la mano al maestro
Che m' ha fatto la casa in sulla via:
E la finestra me l' ha fatta bassa,
Per veder l' amor mio quando ci passa.

Wedlock or good-bye: there are no other courses. Here then is the happy day, and the bridegroom going to fetch home the bride. Here is the whole scene:

The end.

Quando sarà quel benedetto giorno
Che le tue scale salirò pian piano?
I tuoi fratelli me verranno intorno,
Ad uno ad un gli tocchero la mano.
Quando sarà quel dì, cara colonna,
Che la tua mamma chiamerò madonna ?
Quando sarà quel dì, caro amor mio ?
Io sarò vostra, e voi sarete mio !

But hear her cry when she sends him away — not because she will, but because she must. She begins with gentle dignity —

M' è stato detto che a' vostri non piace
Che ci veniate, caro signor mio.
Se non ci puoi venir, dattene pace —
Non stare in guerra più per amor mio. . . .

But at last she breaks out —

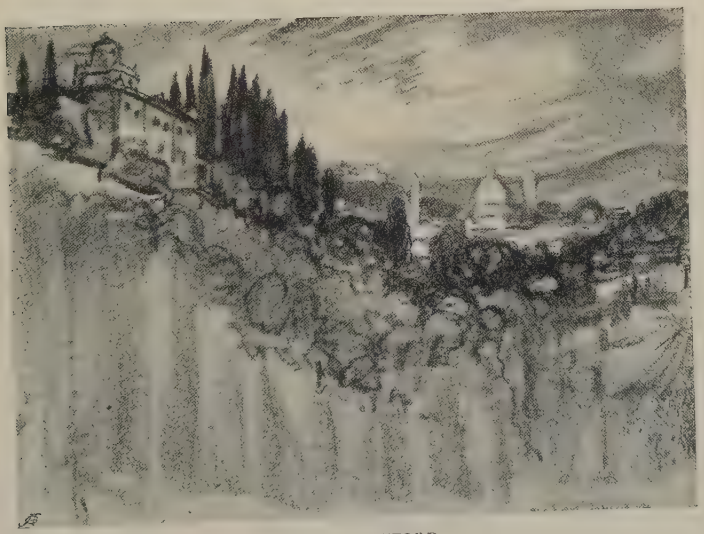
Amore, amore, amor ! passa que' poggi !
Amore, amore, amor ! viemmi a vedere !
Viemmi a vedere innanzi ch' io mi muoia,
Innanzi che m' accendan le candele !

And then — the fount of love all seared and blistered — she sings no more, but weds her old Robin Gray, and becomes a withered hag before she is five-and-twenty. Let us leave her with our benediction for her sweet, singing youth.

Now, I consider that here I have brought you straight into the heart of Tuscany, and shall leave you, with that gate open, to walk the road alone. Dante in one of your pockets, Tigri's *Anthology* in the other, I hold you to be properly equipped. As for Dante, he can stand alone; but for the Professor's garner there is this to be added — that not one word in the whole budget is gross, or vulgar, or otherwise than delicate. Chivalry, assuredly, never made of fleshly love a more dainty ethereal business. Dante never rarefied his Beatrice, Petrarch his Laura, more utterly than Beppino his "bionda e delicata testa," than Nencina, the little barefoot girl, her "bel gelsomino." Nor, and it is a most notable thing, is there one pang of desire, one wail of distress, which may not be satisfied, and is not intended to find its satisfaction or its salve in wedlock. Neither Dante nor Petrarch could

say as much — and they are none the greater poets for the inability.

The heart of Tuscany is as sweet and mellow as the heart of an apple; and so it has ever been.



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